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HAL AND J.



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HAL AND I.



HAL AND I.

In Four Parts.

BY

THE SURVIVOR,

**LATE FELLOW OF THE ROYAL DIABOLICAL SOCIETY FOR THE
AMELIORATION OF MENTAL DISTRESS BY THE SPREAD
OF ATHEISTIC CONSOLATIONS.**



LONDON:

ELLIOT STOCK, 62 PATERNOSTER ROW.

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HAL AND I.

Part the First.

HAL BROWN and I were quizzzy bodies' sport,
Because companioning as brothers ;
Run down were we as flinty-natured sparks
By girls with matches-making mothers.

'Twas not that tastes or habits were alike,
Not these consorted us together—
The best or worst of opposites were we
In form, propensity, and feather.

Like Pats we fought, from politics to whist,
Yet right fraternally behaved it ;
No way knew we from rallying to wrath,
Debate but simmering we waived it.

Though both preferred the cudgel-play of wit,
And staves, adapted to the rodding,
Like ear in staves, sang Donnybrook behaves,
Our blows but Paddy-whacked our wadding.

I well recall his gladiator form,
His thews reminding one of iron,
And how his strange good-fellowship with Lamb
Got him the *sobriquet* of Lion.

We tried rehearse of millenary day,—
So bawled the very balds of Folliton ;
Who said of Kingdom CUMMING we were cits,
Rebukes of standing cosmopolitan.

I felt, with Hal so lion-like, the lamb
Whose name got tacked to me in nature ;
In truth, a weak compassionated thing,
Beside his dignity and stature.

Amazed am I whenever I review
Our love, diversity of stations ;
He well to do ; I grovelling with—well,
Such bores as ne'er-do-well relations.

Concerned was he with Littleton and law,
And I at profitless conjectures ;
I wrote, received my dividends of loss,
And then—from authorship to lectures.

Yet as for these, successful though they were,
They gave more beggary than greedied ;
And so as Brown was stomaching his Coke—
I coked my furnaces as he did.

But that's a fib ! my edible, though Coke,
Was quite a different variety ;
And twice *quant. suff.* one Little-ton to call
Was not my notion of satiety.

I steaked on Coke, Coal muttoned me by stones ;
Right glad were customers to own me ;
Till Coal in freights, too intimate with Slates,
Made them its substitutes to stone me.

My fault ? 'twas not ; yet many people said—
My Coals were tampered with to cheat 'em ;
And, thief and rogue, my punishment should be,
Down, down and literally eat 'em ;

And meet for food they actually were ;
But when my Customers together
Blew hot, blew cold, my mutton-yielding wares
Were beat at chopping by the weather.

Hard ups, hard downs—downs very downs indeed—
Were then my Lamb-entable history,
Yet borne so well, that—jobbing me with Job—
Hal changed my *Mister* Lamb to “ Mystery”

A prince supreme of murmurers was Hal ;
Though void of miseries to grumble at,
It seemed his life's felicity to fret,
To raise impediments to stumble at.

I blamed his mood full frequently, and he
At once repented of his error ;
Then more and worse half-laughingly he 'd growl,
And feign forgetfulness and terror.

He knew my cares, I equally his ease ;
But then my circumstances humble
Were not of course made cruelly distinct,
When he came smoking them to grumble.

It once occurred when mischief-makers lied
I helped his character to scour ;
His friend stood I, when Folliton the sweet
To him was Folliton the sour.

A shell-fish place was Folliton the sweet,
A sell-fish populace within it,
Whom cries of lies, as flat as common-place,
Would charm like nightingale or linnet.

Of course, when full acquittal did the work
It does in tittle-tattle places,
Hal Brown at once got classified with pets,
By lots of Folliton's disgraces.

He sought me out, and diffidence gave way
Before his genial approaches ;
His bright address made miseries less,
Unlike the general encroaches.

As time drew on we companied as friends ;
His style, reverse of condescending,
Not once imposed humiliating terms ;
To me nor patronage nor bending.

At grand abode—some dozen miles away,
His nag delivered him on Sunday ;
Then back to stick at Folliton and law,
His compound sticking-place, on Monday.

He would “hang out” in “Chambers,” for his slang
Was far too Attic-al for Lodgings.
(What shame it is our Collegers began
These low ungentlemanly dodgings !)

I took to him, all hopelessly, my hopes ;
With his he interviewed me gaily ;
Each asked advice, then acted on his own,
As all humanity does daily.

He could have helped, maintained me, and I knew
I might have shared with him his money ;
But love that’s paid for perishes, and so
My crust ne’er coveted his honey.

No help gave he, nor spoke to me of help,
Or word or act had been aggressive ;
To me his heart, and brotherly right hand,
Of more than money were expressive.

He felt as I anxieties I had—
Each shared the secrets of the other ;
But I, the child of poverty, became
Nor drag nor burden on my brother.

Our hearts ignored disparities of state,
All seen impediments were fiction ;
Our fact was Love, who nourished us apart
In quite a magic jurisdiction.

I scarce perceived the weaknesses of Hal ;
My faults, no one of them he'd hear of.
Our small—but great at scandalising—world,
We recked, nor flattery, nor jeer of.

To keep our pact from injuries designed,
We each in rivalry were zealous ;
True, wealth and need were separators, yet
Of both we both of us were jealous.

Had wealth but stooped necessity to aid,
Had need been open to the aiding,
Our blooms of love, so delicate, had shown
Again of Paradise a fading.

Ill-matched surrounds were nothings to us both,
They seemed to neither one belonging ;
Nor pelf of Hal's, nor poverty of mine,
Could more than meditate our wronging.

He 'd faith in me, I 'd confidence in him ;
I, need, in company with riches,
Could show, despite appearances, the bad
Misfits of famine and misstitches.

He knew my cares, perplexities, and straits,
My commissariat defective ;
He knew my life as thoroughly as I,
Himself enriching its perspective.

And I, too, knew his purposes and plans ;
Full oft they 'd holidays and airing ;
To Lord-Chief robes I prophesied his rise,
And swore a creditable wearing.

But then to tease I 'd vilify his wealth,
As, poh ! the filthiest of lucre !
As well at chaff as billiards I excelled—
So said my player—as a fluker !

This give and take, ingenuous and free,
Involved nor awkwardness nor dangers ;
'Twas Hal and I, our spirits, that were one,
'Twas wealth and poverty were strangers.

They could not mate and intercourse be frank,
We kept the separators single ;
And thus the while they scowled upon our cup,
They failed to qualify its mingle.

Our world, of course, took note of us, and made
Its wise—or otherwise—orations,
That mismatched men of property and straw
Would not be keeping their relations.

Yet kept they were, and plainer did they show
The signs of permanent endurance ;
Whereat the vile wore livery of bile,
And cursed my beggarly assurance.

To think that I—a nobody, and worse—
A scrub, a hucksterer in trading,
Should dare contrive inveiglement of Hal
To share my drudgeries degrading.

For true it was, dear fellow, in my toil
He found the helping me congenial ;
Nor deemed he once of labourings with me,
That these, though drudgeries, were menial.

'Twas hard on Hal—on both of us—this blame ;
I vowed I wouldn't let him wear it.
“Pooh ! pooh !” said he, “old fellow, but you must ;
I'll grin like Cheshire cat, and bear it.”

And so the more all Folliton was wroth,
Of more displeasure he was claimant ;
He would disgust the Parson and his wife
By thrice soliciting a payment.

He fought, as his, my battles with a will,
Sought out my patronisers crusty,
Declared that Coals, called villanous and small,
Were not that villanous and dusty.

And what he judged—in equity—was law,
Foes fell like skittle-pins before him ;
No ghost e'er turned the tables as did he—
Nor man nor womankind could floor him.

“ But what a low, dead level of a love ! ”
Exclaim some “ Hiawatha ” greeders :
There, hold your tongues, 'twas actual, and not
So dead as Jupiter's and Leda's !

We scorned to vent that sickly kind of scent,
Whose spell wants spelling sentimental ;
Eye-teeth by smart's first accidence induced—
Our cut, if *low*, was accidental.

Our love did much in marrying us heirs
Of wealth and poverty together ;
And more, far more, when neither was dismayed
By stress of devil-ridden weather.

For that it was ; we neither of us knew
The ease of pleasurable sailing ;
From out our craft worse elements than sea
We both eternally were baling.

The flaws of spleen, of ridicule, of spite,
Contrived no thought of intermission ;
Without a lull, one hurricane of acts
And words and hints in opposition.

Our love, the sport of Folliton for years,
Our league, past parallel a strong one,
Was stabbed, wrenched, kicked, exclaimed against,
defamed,
Because forsooth, it was a wrong one.

The girls but seemed the duplicates of things
That sting for love of it, the teasers ;
The men were full of cursery affronts
That nipped like veritable tweezers.

The she-male huzzy-buzziness of wasps—
In soul as petty as in coating—
Though veiled, was quite perceptible, and worse
Than he-malevolence's noting.

We heard the buzz, buzz, buzzing, but the pests
Not once were captured at our flowers ;
We might, of course, have hunted them—but no ;
It warn't no buzziness of ours.

We let them buzz, remarking by the noise,
A host of buzzy-bodies forming ;
That more about my occiput than Hal's,
They took persistently to swarming.

My dupe was he, a victim and a prey ;
And I, a needy little sharper ;
Abuse of me, false pitying of Hal,
Were cud for sycophant and carper.

Hal Brown the pet, I nothing but the sport
Of all society that knew us ;
'Twas shame, they said, such opposites were linked ;
And how they plotted to undo us !

Yet all in vain ; full carefully and long
We kept our circle uninfracted ;
The more its line all Folliton would break
The more 'twas guarded and compacted.

When spit-spites spilt their venom in our street,
Their mark admitted not of question ;
'Twas I was meant the nastiness to meet
Which came of moral indigestion.

At me—not Hal, calumniators aimed
With fierce unquenchable endeavour :
At last I said, " Hal, parting must be borne—
I'll leave this scandal hole for ever !

"I'll go, and now ; though roughing it, I must
Of peace, at all events, be gainer ;
I can't remain, our characters to give
To each abominable stainer.

"You ne'er from me heard murmur when the Fates
Would mute my many undertakings ;
Though oft I've bent 'neath double-weighted cares
With earth's own quiverings and quakings.

"But now, but this"—Hal's carriage blocked the
way ;
His face lay hidden on my shoulder ;
Yet soon he rose, faced angrily his woes,
More man than Hercules, and bolder.

"What stuff you talk ! We separate !" said he—
"Tush, tush, it maddens me to hear it !
Why all this fuss ? What's Folliton to us ?
You make your bugaboo, and fear it !

"A fig, a rush for Folliton ! for scum
And dregs the surfacing and bottom !
All spawn and rot, quip-typifies the lot,
And curse His Sliminess who got 'em !"

"Hush, hush, old boy, don't fulminate at folks
With whom you intimately mingle ;
'Tis I 'm the one—if either of us must—
These harsh metonymies to jingle.

“ For I’m alone, nor relative nor friend,
Save you, is left me in creation ;
One friend, and he—hard-heartedly begrudged !
Oh sad, oh bitter contemplation ! ”

And then, ’twas I whose manhood was unnerved ;
For Fates unmerciful were tolling
As good as death and burial of him
Whose words were cruellest consoling.

He’d not agree our severance must be ;
He’d not to anything be heedful ;
The midnight chimes were ending at St John’s
Before he suffered it as needful.

A hush—a pause—our enemy To-Day
Is met by merciless To-Morrow :
Twelve smashing blows, each followed by a groan,
A drown—a Mælstrom of sorrow.

A day just closed ; another one begun ;
Hal took to moralizing broadly,
And lit the wild outspread, alas ! for me,
With hopes not commoners but lordly.

The room was mine ; the circumstances these—
A life departing from the embers ;
Two pipes unsmoked—one lying on the floor ;
A raw cold, bitter as December’s.

A tray with bread, cheese, water-cress—untouched;
A jug of fourpenny ; some tumblers ;
Miss Puss and Gyp, too supperless to sleep,
The best of enemies and grumblers ;

Two pale-faced men—one rocking on his chair
As dumb with agony excessive—
His mate a-fret, like lion in a net,
Of all that troubled him expressive.

The care within was fully the reflex
Of out conditions that were starving ;
One seemed to see gentility and need
Not both provided for but halving.

From where we stood 'twas desperate the task—
Ahead out-dismalling surroundings—
From such a dull, dark heaven of despair,
To tell of generous reboundings.

Yet Hal, with all the impetus of love—
So independent of restrictions—
Gave whims the place and consequence of facts,
And raged at verities as fictions.

But when he saw his labouring was vain—
That Hope's extremities were colder—
A break—a stop ; convulsively again
He sobbed and sorrowed on my shoulder.

“You shan’t depart ! yet second thoughts are best—
With me your future shall be taken ;
No hate of fools shall sever us, I vow—
The fools, not you, shall be forsaken.”

For me the nerve, the resoluteness, now,
Good-bye to coward trepidation,
No more affright, bewilderment, and dread,
But forced unnatural elation.

I feigned a laugh—too evidently feigned—
Dismissed my visible dejection,
Rehearsed in haste the body of my plan,
Then strove at checking its infection.

“Why, Hal, look here, pass hitherward that tube—
Confound this double-wickèd sputter !
Let’s palm a Palmer candle on the lamp
Before obscurity is utter.

“Thanks, thanks—all’s right—by Jupiter, what’s this?
Don’t kicks give emphasis to hurry ?
Your pipe—as I’m a ’bacco-smoking man !
Good luck—not injured in the skurry !

“Hal, let’s exchange ; I’m coveting some toy
You’ll feel the miss of for a token ;
To give remind of somebody behind,
Of links unbreakable and broken.

“Thanks, thanks again ; the memories with this
Shall drop-down energies embolden ;
Shall tell of bonds as mendable as pipes—
That best of ligatures are golden.

“Gold, hard and cold, acts cruelly by Love,
Who ’s left to perish in a cottage—
Says sweet Miss Wise, her sheepish little eyes
Too soon indicative of dot-age.

“But Love ’s at home in palace as in cot ;
’Tis not his countenance is missing ;
The one that ’s lost ’s a counterfeit—not Love,
For all his carnying and kissing.

“Whene’er two rooms are quitted for a seat,
If Love ’s been present in the dwelling,
He wills to go, included in the move,
Nor needs persuading nor compelling.

“And say his life was trouble-worn before
By plus of yellow-boys, it ’s smoother :
Oh, gold ’s no ill, ’tis anodyne to need.
Of Love’s anxieties the soother.

“For gold I long ; best remedy for care
Is wealth’s alleviating ointment ;
I do aver too many of us err
By misconceiving its appointment.

“ Gold bands our snapped life-intercourse shall wrap,
And Love more vigorous than ever
To strain, to bend, indifferent shall be,
Shall dare hostility to sever.

“ This pipe so strong—far better than renewed—
But pipes our fracturing and joining ;
My bark for El Dorado is afloat,
And mints of money I'll be coining :

“ Then back I'll haste on Pegasus to you—
But ere the finish of my journey,
You'll strut Attorney-General, or perhaps
A much more general attorney.

“ But let's to sup—good gracious, how I've talked !
I've nought but bread and cheese and cresses ;
Yet—bless that Jane ! she's garnished our repast
With roots of reddish from her tresses !

“ Since nine—and now 'tis twenty after twelve—
Our meal's been cooling into frigid ;
The beer—by Jove, it's chillier than death,
And looks, though bodiless, as rigid !

“ I'll put, like Pat, existence to thy life
Thou all but suffocated smoulder !
Why, Hal, old pal, it's perishing, and we
Shall soon match Charity that's colder !”

I could no more, my miserable aims
At spontaneity were ghastly ;
That night my mirth machinery did nought
But vex more cruelly and vastly.

Yet how came we thus sensitive and sad ?
How our thermometer at zero ?
Had we the right—our “ villanous small beer ”—
To match Miss Porter’s hero—beer O ?

At me at least society’s aghast—
My carte imagined from my carting—
It scouts my claim like gentleness to feel,
Or show their agonies at parting.

Ah, grief’s a splendid leveller of men !
It knows no difference in stature ;
Brings down the tall, brings up to them the small,
Makes nought so plane to us as nature.

We sat and sat, a melancholy space,
Then Hal made hastily a movement ,
Yet spoke no word, for utterance seemed bent
Much more on mischief than improvement.

We filled our pipes, and Hal and I and Gyp—
In far more hurry than his master—
Went forth to gauge the weather in its rage,
To hear its bodings of disaster.

A pour of sleet, a miserable wind,
A sound of howling and of sighing,
The thought of wild demoniac carouse,
The blend of revelry and dying.

But clear and brisk and musical above,
A joy exuberant, ecstatic ;
'Twas Gyp's, who rushed undaunted at the world,
A pug pugnaciously dogmatic.

As if the knight of maidens in distress—
Two dears with pretty eyes averted—
He put the world—the universe to flight,
And got his party-colours dirtied.

“ Good dog ! good dog ! there, that 'll do, down,
down !
If men but Hector'd it as you did,
One half their cares would vanish, or if found,
Be far more speedily concluded.”

Gyp roused us up, made vigorous our hopes ;
We took enormously his teaching ;
Canine bow-wows, we both of us declared,
Were worth a Christendom of preaching.

We felt ashamed, half laughing at ourselves,
Of all our womanish behaving,
Took leave, with feigned emotion, of our cares,
And shammed wet handkerchiefs and waving.

'Twas quite a sight, our boisterous display,
Extremes had never such a meeting,
Like Gyp, we dared the universe at large,
And gave all enemies a beating.

As flushed with wine we braved it at the door
Of Hal's apartments in The Crescent,
Nor deemed of such reboundings as we felt,
They came of spirit evanescent.

We said—we roared—our jovial Good-byes ;
I feigned to spar at Hal and fist him ;
And as for Gyp, the muddy little wretch,
Where coat was muddiest I kissed him.

Then back alone I tore along the streets,
Was home in body ere I'd started ;
I crept as if burglariously in,
And Peace evading me departed.

On mat all wet and weather-stained I stood—
That room was more than I could enter—
'Twas just the place for solitary man
To hap on devilish tormentor.

To seek me there a lucifer I feared
Might give another than I needed ;
The Wrong just then clutch-clutching at my hand
I cared p'rhaps less about than he did.

I groped my way in darkness up the stair,
And soon was settled on my pillow ;
But sleep at once transferred me as it seemed
From bed—a double bed—to billow.

No rest for me ; I tossed upon the deep,
Took dream-like counsellings with trouble,
Had wild conceits of vessels going down
In boil tempestuous and bubble.

Ere day's light troops had started on their march,
The night's hoarse multitudes to scatter,
I, broad awake, was conning as I lay
A plan for bruiting our matter.

With warn of dawn my project was complete,
And past the bitterness of parting ;
That chief heart grief with both of us had run
Which knows no secondary starting.

We met at noon—Hal, Gyp, of course, and I ;
We met as heretofore as often ;
But now the show and fripperies of woe
Came in its cruelty to soften.

We got—how strange ! accustomed to our state ;
I seemed ere going thence a rover ;
That long, long night of suffering and tears,
The throes of severance were over.

As then we felt we never more could feel
When grief was primary and crushing ;
Reflows of woes seem miserable ebbs
To first ungovernable flushing.

“ This Wharf To Let—the Business to be Sold—
With full immediate possession : ”
This tart conceit gave Folliton the sweet
What ? on the face of it, depression.

When tongues averred an opening had occurred,
Folks all as wonder-stricken eyed one ;
“ Good luck for Lamb ! an opening for him ! ”
If width is luckiness, a wide one !

I saw—“ Why, Lamb, so sorry you are off ! ”
In lots of visages dejected ;
Idea I ’d none at any time that I
Was so amazingly respected !

This late display of super-superfine
Esteem extended to my presence,
But made me more in hurry to depart,
More full of aggravating pleasance.

Full well I knew the rottenness within
These would-be genuine externals ;
Your nuts with brains aren’t similar to Spain’s,
They don’t make privates of their kernels.

My so-called friends were plentiful before,
But now their complement was doubled ;
And girls who tears—the crocodiles !—alleged
Were worst of allegators troubled.

My trade friends said I second was to none—
That 's next (in irony) to nothing ;
A she-gal friend stood stuttering—"Doth—doth"—
And stuck like anything at Doth-ing.

But what was more than utterance could shape
Without obliquity she squinted ;
One eye 'twas plain acidulated Lamb,
The worst one peppered him and minted.

Or take and join mint-sauciness with coin,
Her eyes flash currencies were uttering ;
I bowed to one—though which I couldn't say—
And 'scaped her squinneying and stuttering.

With more—ill met—less fortunate I had
With this, the other one and that one,
To keep a crowd of Olivers at bay,
To make each Rolander a pat one.

The type my cross-eyed Quakeress of all
I hap'd unluckily to light on :
Where grew my mint ? and whither was I bound ?
I'd this new Marathon to fight on.

My slice of luck fed Folliton for days ;
But when the busybodies crabbed,
Renounced because it physicked them the food—
Themselves, mad-dogging me, went rabid.

They called me mad for loathing the burlesque
Of sauce provided me to sigh for :
“A more of sweet, of vinegar a less,
Ted Lamb’s Ted Bed-Lamb-ite to try for !”

To show dissatisfaction with my lot
Was reprehensible and sinful ;
Of pert reserve, stuck-uppishness and pride,
They called me nothing but a skin full.

I chose to keep my secrets to myself—
Affront sufficient for the curious ;
And so because Paul Pry-ishness was baulked
All Follitonia was furious.

From grief to rage, from patronage to scorn,
There came a marvellous revulsion ;
The wind went round from genial to coarse
As if by magical compulsion.

But then a kind and gentlemanly man—
Well up in doing for his neighbour,
Was moved by next door premises “To Let,”
To take compassion on my labour.

He took at once the premises, and took
The trade identical I'd followed;
Then sat him down expectant in the niche
Which I'd laboriously hollowed.

It served me right, said everybody round,
With looks disgusted and indignant—
Then gave my next door enemy their grace,
Jocose, religious, and benignant.

My trade all gone, irrevocably gone,
No will worth buying to dispose of,
My nights and days with Folliton the sweet
I saw delightedly the close of.

I paid in full my creditors, and then
Had twice ten sovereigns in pocket,
One poor old trunk of very odds and ends
And my companionship to shock it.

No plan had I—the going thence except—
So sent my luggage to the station,
Described with Hal the circle of the town,
And felt the universe my nation.

Across the fields we started for the rail—
A six mile misery of tramping;
Whilst rain in sheets and ocular repeats
Were worse to both of us than damping.

The start-point reached, our parting was at hand,
I took my ticket for a city
More famed for fine cathedralling than faith,
And far less business like than pretty.

I talked, and so incessantly did Hal,
But no—no syllable of parting;
The time at hand when severance must be
Last words were timorous at starting.

Up came the train—some twenty minutes late;
A rush, and—“Where shall I address you?”
“I’ll write you word to-morrow or to-night.”
“Good bye—(*Stand back you, sir!*)—God
bless you!”

.

And that was all; the bitterness was quaffed;
Last words at latest were unspoken.
I flung me down disconsolate, and then
My heart seemed breakable and broken.

PART THE SECOND.



Part the Second.



ALONE, alone, alone upon the world,
And oh, the wretchedness, the shrinking!
Alone, alone, unfriended and unknown,
And oh, the misery of thinking!

For dull and drear and dilatory hours—
Alone, like waif upon an ocean—
Was still the one interminable grind
Of mind, and carriages in motion.

Alone, alone, adrift upon a waste,
Where none but favourites are cherished;
All ties untied, what benefit my life?
Its hopes or withering or perished.

'Twas oh for days of happiness I knew !
For home's affectionates to kiss me !
Dead, dead, all dead : " I only am escaped "—
But Hal to care about or miss me.

Alone, alone, a solitary wretch,
My one companionship denied me,
None, none but self to stay upon, alone,
No help but helplessness to guide me.

My plans, my joys, done stealthily to death,
The dogs of destiny pursuing,
And I in flight, like murderer, from doom
Sent forth to compass my undoing.

'Twas what to do ? and whither to proceed ?
So lost, unfortunate, distracted,
It seemed as if life's history should close—
Cut short by suicide enacted.

But few the miles and stoppages, and then
The place I'd settled to alight at ;
Yet what to me locality I neared ?
No home there waiting me to night at.

But oh that one, that dolorous refrain !
That mind-demoralizing clatter !—
Alone, alone, a burden on the world,
And soon on beggary and tatter.

At last the loud monotony became
At least a body soporific,
A note to soothe whose potency surpassed
The best medicinal specific.

Full length on bench uneasily I slept,
Re-dreamed a fantasy appalling,
That I, from unimaginable height,
Headlong to Phlegethon was falling.

My mind, despite oblivion of sleep,
Still worked and fretted in its working ;
I fell and fell, till suddenly a jerk,
And then delirium of jerking.

The train stood still, and something was proclaimed
By Guard insufferably local—
Yet rude and rough 'twas evident enough
His best proficiency was vocal.

For words that grate, less cruel are than deeds
Of incivility and rudeness—
Third Class yourselves, you passengers by Third—
Is worse when acted on than crudeness.

The brute who flung my valuables out,
Announced my journeying as ended ;
I left in cloak-room custody my trunk,
And took my temper to be mended.

I sought the peace of solitary shades,
Heart-sick of visible regar'der,
For men I met suspected me, and looked
A sort of icicles, but harder.

'Tis so at large : in cities where the world
Is small through knowledge of its neighbour,
Your rough-hewn tyke eyes strangers with dislike,
And smacks of cudgel to belabour.

In hives and drives more populous and vast,
Where all is skurrying and hustle,
The bulk are strange, and strangerhood, of course,
Goes quite unnoticed in the bustle.

Alone, alas ! one moiety of men
Resents your presence as intrusive ;
The rest, well-dressed, don't notice you at all,
Unless you're begging or abusive.

Alone, alone, go anywhere you will,
The world won't know you as a brother,
At best it thinks you'd better be referred
By tract from this world to another.

Alas ! alas ! alone upon the world,
The world does nothing but distress you :
How harsh its words ! how different from Hal's !
An imprecatory " God bless you ! "

You too, you too, my noble-hearted friend !
His best of benisons attend you ;
May you ne'er drift alone upon the world,
With ne'er a creature to befriend you !

For sure there is a Majesty on high,—
Yet how like atheist I doubt it !
I got my first misgivings of the fact
From old indifference about it.

Both Hal and I were regular at Church—
But he, a Chorister in white gown ;
Whilst I, although a Chorister, had not
The face to countenance a night-gown.

Full oft we met, but only in the week ;
Our rest days counted we as no days—
Though I and he, at Folliton, at home,
Were apt to speak of them as "slow" days.

We both could sing, and musical results
Were all that either of us cared for ;
We went to Church on practice nights to stare
Then ask the blushing—What they stared for ?

We stayed and took the sacrament, because
Confirmed the parsons said we ought to ;
We did our lay externalisms well—
That is, as well as we'd been taught to.

The folks around were parallels of us ;
They went to Church upon the Sunday,
Seemed glad as grigs when Sabbathing was o'er
And took like infidels to Monday.

Our time was spent in rollicking, in trade,
In full performance of professions,
Which placed beside our Sunday ones but show'd—
How strong were weekly retrogressions !

We stuck to Church, anathema'd Dissent,
Or Friends, or Wesleyans, or Ranters,
Looked down on all the Chapellers as fools
Or rogues of heretics and canters.

Whilst they—to blame as liberal as we—
In words equivalently soapish
Denounced our Church, her Ritual and Work
As vile, theatrical and Popish.

Suppose a meet for charitable ends—
A free to anybody platform—
Because 'twas free our Clergyman declined
To lend his countenance and fat form.

Whereat of course all Folliton rejoiced,
Except the pestilent schismatics,
Who chafed and kick'd like anything you please
That tells of donkeyhood's ecstasies.

The Church folks said, "We're positively right,
Which proves all heretics in error ;"
But here both Church and Chapel were alike,
And each its adversary's terror.

We kept of course our Festivals and Fasts,
Our Lent, Rogation-days, and Ember,
More saints than days, too, bothering about
And most perplexing to remember.

We men were marched all soldierly and well,
Year round in regular procession ;
The girls hard-worked at Altar-cloths and spent
Their lives in sinning for Confession.

The corns of all the Chapellers we scrunched,
When corns were subject of thanksgiving ;
High game, High Church, our preference was shown
For all high luxuries of living.

Our Priest, a man of liberal ideas,
Whilst grand at posturing and facing,
Enjoined on both the women and the men
To use more liberty in lacing.

Not tight, not strait, but comfortably loose,
Should sit the corset of religion ;
Our Faith was not to cripple us or cage
As caged are nightingale and pigeon.

He said, God's gifts were sent to be enjoyed,
That all had appetites to relish,
That long-drawn phiz in universe of smiles
Was right down devilish and hellish.

But words fall flat unseconded by deed,—
What stress so forcible as practice ?
His D.D'd weight gave power to his word—
No fear *his* practising was quacktise !

He danced, played cards, drank anything, and smoked,
Liked smut, conundrums, and the Playhouse,
He coursed, he rowed, went dinnering, and made
Each house he visited a gay house.

He might have bored, but Parson though he was
None felt his presence a restriction ;
He chaffed and laughed when with us in the week,
Nor dreamt of homfly infliction.

He liked the free and easiness of life,
Enjoyed as others did a fast thing,
Talked small talk, tall talk, anything but shop,
In mind apparently the last thing.

Yet what a trade in Charity he drove !
In week-day worrying and begging !
He pegged—no fib—a double game of crib,
One's purse got riddled by his pegging.

His "By the way" was ruin on the spot,
You saw 'twas accident concerted ;
He called to see your family restored—
He came from family deserted.

The gifts we gave made nullities of sins—
At least so most of us concluded—
We winced, yet liked our money to be drawn,
Nor felt in giving it deluded.

By just his shape we all of us were cut,
And felt exceedingly religious ;
Our frame and name if militant was so
Because we 'd enemies litigious ;

'Twas they who fought—kick-kicking at the pricks—
A set of tallow-faces greasy !
What right had low Dissenters to assert
Our style was piety made 'easy !

What right had such to snigger at our faith
In Apostolical succession !
To frown down town-made crosses that were worn !
To bay auricular confession !

To say our Priests, assuming to be John's,
And Paul's, and Timothy's successors,
In look, word, act, position and estate,
Were nought but scandalous digressors !

Of course we gave as good as we received—
Abuse but put us on our mettle—
When they began black-blackguarding our pot,
We blacked as handsomely their kettle.

Church barbs and garbs obtrusively displayed,
Though not from Paris, were the fashion ;
To doubt our faith—was any time enough
To put hot piety in passion.

Yet here was I, in wilderness of need,
As if by tyrannous contrivance !
As if a fell Monstrosity supreme
Of all had ordered my deprival !

My long and strong devotion to the Church,
My strict unvarying behaviour,
My praise—in scorn Hymn-piety pronounced—
Was less than godlessness a saviour.

The world at large *was* prosperous and gay—
Should I then wander in affliction ?
'Twas it had right to wretchedness and curse,
And I to wealth and benediction.

The fine High Church religion I had worn
Was worse than valueless on trial ;
It found, it kept me ignorant of God,
Nor check'd my sceptical denial.

The prayers I'd said in private and at Church—
“Good Lord deliver me from damning”—
I felt them all but emptiness, the full
And foul reality of shamming.

In spite my prayers, observances and gifts,
My heart was ever at a distance,
I shunn'd to know the Saviour I'd address'd,
And now I doubted His existence.

My prayers were more to vacancy than God,
My praise the whole of it external,
My Church demean was nothing but pretence,
My faith no better than infernal.

And that I knew ; and secretly I felt
'Twas I was worthy of reproof ;
Yet blam'd I God, and atheist at heart,
From life determin'd His removal.

Yet still in this my horror of distress
I craved the comforting of Jesus,
I long'd to fall reliant upon God,
And plead His promises to ease us.

But no—not I, the Deity to me
Was now but fabulous and baseless ;
In spite of Church and piety profess'd
I felt unutterably graceless.

As far remov'd from godliness seem'd I—
Till then a zealot in my duty—
As horns and tail of Lucifer himself
From forms angelical in beauty.

I scoffed at God, His righteousness, His might,
His love, His government, His being,—
Got red-hot help from devils in my house,
Myself too willingly agreeing.

If God's a fact, His handiwork am I,
The peer in ev'ry way of any,
And yet I starve, whilst myriads are rich—
A scorn'd exception to the many.

Was mine the blame this portion to deserve?
Was I more meritless than others?
Why I so poor—an orphan and alone—
My lot less lucky than another's?

The rogues divide the luxuries of life,
Enjoy its riches and its revels;
If God directs, His children He neglects,
The ones He cares for are the devil's.

My life—a scene of trouble and dismay—
A long continuance of tumbles—
Was not defac'd, whatever was its cross,
By discontentedness or grumbles.

I took my lot and bore it like a man ;
And say my worship was mistaken—
As well did I as myriads around,
Yet I—I only was forsaken.

The name of Christ, when uttered in the Church,
Receiv'd my lowliest obeisance,
I own'd Him Lord, and stood upon my right
At least to heavenly complaisance.

Who more than I God's benefits deserves ?
Who's less deserving of affliction ?
Were God a fact, His mercies would be mine,
And not this weight of malediction.

I won't believe in Heaven nor in Hell,
No fear of anything I'll cherish,
I live—I die—my body and my soul,
The self they signify, will perish.

No God—say I, nor devil to appal ;
For all my talking of the latter,
It can't be true He's orderer of all
This university of matter.

Were God a fact, I shouldn't have been left
Alone in wretchedness to wander—
But hark ! what's that ? assuredly the bell
Of *ex-Cathedralizers* yonder.

'Tis just on four, no lodging have I sought—
My traps, too, waiting at the station—
And then I've known no feeding but a crust,
My fat matutinal collation.

Yet mind at ease seems better than a meal ;
The soul, unutterably thrilling,
Has sense of guilt with exigence beyond
What's met by gluttoning and swilling.

The soul—will that be nourish'd and restored
By foods distasteful and rejected ?
It may be—yes, though appetites are changed
As if by wizardry affected.

Suppose my mind, disordered and upset,
Has work'd contrariwise, misled me !
I've had my scant sufficiency till now,
And p'rhaps the Deity has fed me.

If that's the fact, I tremble with dismay,
My thoughts have compass'd my undoing ;
Will God forgive my attitude, my words,
My doubts not hidden from His viewing.

If God till now has cherish'd me, my doubts
Of His supremacy and being,
No hurt to Him, fall crushingly on self,
And prompt from punishment the fleeing.

Though poor and worn, I've money in my purse,
Enough for many times my craving,
A home's been mine, nor clothing have I lacked—
Ah, Lord ! be merciful and saving !

'Tis true I've much to harass and perplex,
But mine's not heaviest of bearing ;
I've felt too much my present and my past,
By misconceiving and comparing.

I've set my state and circumstance beside
All state and circumstance above me ;
Yet I—I'm rich, enormously to some ;
O Lord, compassionate and love me !

Oh, had I mark'd the poverty, the woe
Endured by multitudes below me,
My lot by theirs would thankfulness have taught ;
O Lord, thy pitifulness show me !

I've health and strength, clear intellect and cash—
The fiend's own curses on my puling !
On self my full recovery depends,
And God my destiny is ruling.

Shall I—so blind—infallibly dictate
To Him the way He ought to lead me ?
I'll trust henceforth His mercy and His love
To guide, invigorate, and feed me.

He feeds a world, whose animals and men
Are past enumerating, daily ;
And all—save man, all creaturehood, all life
Receives both thankfully and gaily.

But ah ! He feeds both enemies and friends ;
And I—unnumbered with the latter—
Again despond ; at liberty again
Is all that devilry and clatter.

I'm here—worse luck ! confronted and appall'd
By doom unutterably fearful :
Had choice been mine—I never would have been !
So tried, so terrified, so tearful.

I'm born—I'm here—an enemy of God ;
As born, so fated to continue ;
The sport alike of destiny and men,
Who, but for decency, would skin you.

My lot was known, my torturing contrived
Before my misery's beginning ;
I live to face the suffering of Hell,
To bear the penalty of sinning.

Conceived in sin—oh why was I put here
To cope unaided with the Devil !
If God can help—He leaves me to my fate,
To find in Tartarus my level.

I needs must sin, yet Deity declares
One point offended in will pin me !
He frowns—He storms ; I terrify, I dread,
He shows no tenderness to win me.

I shrink—He drives me from Him in dismay—
I daren't confess to Him my errors ;
I want His grace, His pardon, but I shun—
I fly His cruelty, His terrors.

His smiles seem all bestow'd upon the few ;
The most, of happiness denuded—
What for their life ? poor labourers in vain,
Misplaced, misgovern'd, and deluded !

If God's but Love, the multitudes of men
Produced since Adam was created
Are strange results—a holocaust for One
By nought but sacrifices sated.

The bulk of men—all equals and alike—
Were form'd for nothing but to perish !
If few get saved and myriads are lost,
What hope is given one to cherish ?

They said at Church, obedience to Christ
Would end in calling and election ;
I did obey, like needle at His name
I show'd magnetical deflection :

And yet God's still unreconciled to me ;
Far, far from honouring my doing,
He sends His wrath in hurricanes to warn,
How fierce the enemy pursuing !

Not call'd—'tis true election may be mine,
For God, the wicked one's employer,
Creates to damn, electing us to hell,
Himself Creator and Destroyer.

'Twas whim that gave me miserable place
In state mismention'd as probation ;
If God but fore-elects us to be lost,
He's worse than cruel in creation.

I've knelt to God, I've revered His Son,
Profess'd none other one as Master,
And this results—my present is despair,
Before is lowering disaster !

For faith I've shown this only the return
Proclaims already my rejection ;
I walk the earth be-devil'd and condemn'd,
And mock'd with other folks' election !

Yet all this while I've trotted with the creed
Imbibed from homily and prayer-book,
I cast it off—I'll never be again
The dupe of flummery and snare-book.

I'll live—I'll die, the infidel I am ;
A myth's the recognised controller ;
For say He's fact, He's crueller than hell—
A fiend pretending the consoler.

He can't exist, or cognizant of me
He'd see my interests protected,
Give hope of life, show happiness in store,
He'd not leave any one neglected.

How came I born ? By accident—by chance :
More strange my consciousness than lucky !
I like the thought, it animates the heart,
Makes pulse more confident and plucky.

A fool I've lived—too diffident, too meek ;
The world, so pushing by the shoulder,
Henceforth I'll meet by pushing in return—
We'll see whose spirit is the bolder !

I die—I cease ; my being is defunct ;
I've no concernment with hereafter ;
I'll push my way—dishonest as the rest—
And greet the consequence with laughter.

So long as law has clutches to alarm
I'll keep, or baffle, or evade it ;
'Tis law of man alone I have to fear—
Too long I've honour'd and obey'd it.

But see—I'm here; 'tis coming on to rain,
I'll take this shelter from the weather,
I'll see if God will show us that He comes
Where few are gathering together.

Now why this Pile, high-towering and grand?
To shore the popular delusions!
It reeks of pomp, intolerance and craft,
And pap-pap papalist effusions!

If now some Priest of Jupiter or Mars
With me could company and enter,
He'd hold this most magnificent deceit
The fane of heathenism's centre.

Not told that groups in porphyry and bronze
Were raised to perishable glory,
He'd get from head-bared mutterers around
Some gloss, some colour for his story.

He'd go back home astonish'd and impress'd,
Report idolatry in Britain,
Then give such full descriptions of our gods
As we of heathendom's have written.

What up-stuck pride, profanity and cant,
Is Christianity profession!
Why L. S. D. computing his effects,
Counts God's own Temple his possession!

He builds its courts professedly for God—
No stint of money for its splendour,
Then finds some way for prominent display
Of praise which deifies the spender !

If praise of God 's consider'd on and plann'd,
His name accounted of and reckon'd,
Whate'er 's designed, the uttermost achieved
Is— God to anybody second !

First comes the praise and honouring of man,
'Tis he 's monopolist in sharing :
These stocks, these stones, these effigies of braves—
Indeed are monuments of daring !

But soft—here come the Choristers and Priests,
In pride of livery and gumption ;
Why treat those Priests us Laity as beasts ?
Because they 're greater—in presumption !

They stand to us as Officers to file,
Compel where possible as masters ;
They fear perhaps such liberty to give
As might give liberty to Pastors.

Now who 's to hear that parrot in the desk ?
His tones tone gibberish it may be !
I know the words, but what of such as don't ?
Why spread bewilderment—thou gaby !

Who plann'd and built this Temple was an ass,
A dull unmitigated looby!
But yet, maybe, he fashion'd it to drown
Thy bray, anticipated booby!

That bass-stop's good—yet melody in peals
But minds one's tympanum of storming;
The air—dear, dear, 'tis positively lost!
What *is* that lunatic performing?

Ay, that's the word; performances alone
We've all been gathering to witness;
God's praise, by live machinery and dead,
But oh, how parallel in fitness!

As void of praise those singers as the pipes;
The boys in night equipments laughing—
And there's yon big-nosed tenor with his mate
Intent on snuffables and chaffing!

Those men, those boys, like instruments perform,
For all their consciousness of being;
So far as praise in spirit is concern'd—
'Tis all fictitiousness and spreeing.

As well have left their praising parts at home,
Have brought but tunefulness and bellows;
The wood, the brass—the body and the breath,
Are not dissimilar but fellows.

The prayers were read like tedious reports,
The part-song follow'd in its order ;
The girl next me con-noodle-ing her swain,
Who mix'd his digits with and paw'd her.

The "*Praise ye*" sung—'twas splendidly perform'd—

My Lord and Lady Lack-a-Daisy
Arose to go, I follow'd, and indeed
To quit the bulk of us were crazy.

'Twas plain the folks had come to be amused,
To hear the singing and the organ,
As such folks go to theatre or show
To see she-acrobat or gorgon.

'Tis strange these Priest monopolists of Church
Are so unskilful in their warming,
They stove the place but petrify the heart
By cold as icicles performing.

All sense of God was banish'd from my mind,
No God was present or receiving ;
I saw, I felt, ay even while I knelt,
That make-believing was believing.

I scarce remark'd these mockeries as shams,
So bold their impudence, so glaring ;
But how I saw what fooleries for years
I'd been conniving at and sharing !

Our fine High Church performances are noised
As best and holiest of worship,
But dogs who bark thus vauntingly assert
Much more convincingly their curship.

I know but this—such worshipping to me
Was nought but slovenly pretending—
Mere red-tape work, just anyhow got through
By Clerks regardless of offending.

I went—no more a follower of Church—
With eyes well open'd to the mocking ;
I left enraged, and greedily I craved
For once the power of unfrocking.

I felt confirm'd, establish'd in my view,
There was nor Deity nor Saviour ;
Whilst Priests were wolves pretending to be sheep
In dress, soft mouthing and behaviour.

I chose me now my quarters for the night,
Then got per omnibus from station
The trunk I'd left in custody at noon,
And gave my other trunk a ration.

I had a sort of project in my mind
To give these citizens a Reading,
And so I went " Commercial " to mine inn
To stamp my gentlemanly breeding.

My tea despatch'd, I slumber'd in my chair
Till just eleven, when a party
From out the smoke or billiard-room disturb'd
My dreams of Baal and Astarte.

They seem'd, though not their worshippers, to be
A sort of worshippers of fire ;
Its shape was gin—too frequently a snare,
Which floors the cellar and the buyer.

I went to rest, or rather to my room,
(They put "Commercial" in an attic)—
A third floor back—"the only one unlet"—
So said the chambermaid emphatic.

I lock'd my door, read notice on the wall
That here tobacco was forbidden ;
"Ha ! ha !" laughed I, "here goes then at the law
From whose detectives I am hidden."

I lit my pipe, threw sorrow to the winds,
Along with lucifer from casement,
Flung wide the old-style lattice for the air,
And smoked in gathering amazement.

The night was clear and Luna at the full,
The stars right gloriously shining,
The clouds—but few—were luminous as though
No part was left of them but lining.

How came the stars? how came they where they are?
By chance, hap-hazard, or by placing?
Are all those orbs a casual result?
Or God's inimitable gracing?

What years on years their order has been kept;
By chance, by accident their motion?
There seems control, good government, and more—
There seems originating notion.

A horse but comes, when run-away, to grief;
Those orbs, if riderless and bolting,
Should, wild as horse at liberty, run foul
And give the universe a jolting.

Suppose they all by accident consist,
Suppose by accident they travel,
How strange it seems no accident occurs!
I can't the mystery unravel.

There's not a God—I'm satisfied of that;
And yet these riddles so perplexing
Seem solved at once if He is at the head;
Quash Him—and questioning is vexing.

Am I the child of accident? it seems
Beyond one's power to believe it;
And yet, unless the Deity's a fiend,
I'm bound by reason to receive it.

Yet here's this room most eloquently dumb,
My thoughts as prisoners arresting ;
It seems to say—"An Infidel ! thou fool !
Come give thy principles a testing.

"How came these prints array'd upon my wall ?
How came deliverance from dirting ?
How came this bright new carpet in accord
With boards irregularly skirting ?

"How came these threads in elegant design ?
How came its equal repetition ?
How came this stand crock-furnish'd as you see ?
How came this table in position ?

"This bed, this glass, this mantel and this stove,
All tell the human intervention ;
They came—they came—fortuitously came—
Is that your meagre apprehension ?

"How came this Book—the Bible—on these
drawers ?
How came it open for your guiding
Where God proclaims the atheist a fool,
Beyond intelligent abiding ?

"Just wing your way from little things to great—
From this arrangement to the stellar—
Set free the mind that Deity's bestow'd
To be your scepticism's queller."

I took the Book with agitated hand ;
Outside its covering were letters
Which show'd the fact that many were in league
To loose poor ignorance from fetters.

No end of kind and charitable souls
Had sent this Volume as a present ;
More rare the gift—though irony objects—
Than grouse, plump partridges or pheasant.

Take room by room, in each of them was one,
To meet men's devilry and libels ;
No doubt Hotels were ev'rywhere as this
Supplied thus graciously with Bibles.

I turn'd the leaves, read eagerly and long ;
No thoughts but agonized and smarted ;
I fain had read for longer, but my light
Flared up rebellious and departed.

Who comes to God must realize "HE IS"—
On this—by accident?—I'd stumbled ;
"HE IS"—my sense would have it was the truth,
Although litigiously it grumbled.

By chance those stars—by accident this Book !
None doubt the printer of the latter,
As much unknown as Deity Himself
First Cause of intellect and matter.

Who says these leaves came orderly by chance,
But shows an idiotcy pulish ;
Who says those skies by accident were spread,
Is worse than idiot, he's mulish !

There *is* a God ! O Deity on high,
Forgive my doubting and misgiving !
Thou art—Thou art ! each atom has a voice
And cries th' Omnipotent is living !

He made the dust, He gather'd it and gave
In space its particles consistence,
Sun, Moon, and Stars, conducted by His hand
So keep equality of distance.

What like is God? He's terrible to me—
His child, His miserable creature ;
O God reveal Thy character, Thyself,
Be Thou my monitor and teacher !

All seen effects say—Deity is Good ;
Ay, e'en the storms are efficacious ;
And maybe ills that desolate the soul
Have ends but merciful and gracious.

But though the seen is eloquent in praise
Of God, the fashioner of being,
'Tis not enough ; I agonize for more
Than comes by reasoning and seeing,

Are these the all that speak to us of God ?
Then seems one's agonizing hopeless ;
The world with nought but Nature to explain
Should live religionless and Popeless.

The faith that's firm on Scriptural supports—
Is that undoubtedly the true one ?
That faith was mine—yet surely it was wrong ;
'Tis time I changed it for a new one.

Yet stay—my faith was founded on a book
At best but second to the Bible ;
In time that's past my counsellor, it yet
May be or verity or libel.

I'll test its worth ; the Bible shall reveal
Its truth, addenda or abatements ;
'Tis time indeed I verified my creed—
The fact or fiction of its statements.

But when that's done—what is it that is done ?
Suppose the Bible to be fiction !
Though here received, how's any one to know
If God's the spirit of its diction ?

Mahomet's book may possibly be true,
Our own a wicked imposition !
Confucius, Buddha, Catholics and we—
And which the sacred exhibition ?

Perplex'd, distraught, full wearily I strove
To find escape from my dilemma,
Till sleep at length, a current in its strength,
O'ercame the struggles of its stemmer.

Next morn I rose, a melancholy man,
And went in earnest to my labour,
Not quite so bent on shouldering the world,
Not quite so jealous of my neighbour.

I'd not of wealth a plethora in store,
So forced and hurried a proceeding
To give some bits of merriment from Boz—
And hoped a profitable Reading.

The place was large, such Readings were "the rage,"
For me assuredly a bumper ;
I bought my bills, paid printer in advance,
And felt my pocket would be plumper.

I took the rooms considered in the town
The most convenient and roomy,
Did all I could to make it a success,
And felt less desperate and gloomy.

For that day week the Reading I announced,
Made friends with one or two reporters,
My landlord's wife took tickets to be sold,
For which I ticketed her daughters.

Meantime, my mind unutterably worn
By doubts, new questionings and vexings,
Inclined me now towards hopefulness and God,
And now towards sceptical perplexings.

With time to spare for reading and for thought,
I turn'd soul gluttonous to study,
Read all God's Word intelligently through—
Re-read the providences bloody.

I need not tell what shiverings, what fears,
What hopes, discoveries and wonders,
Came in, like floods, to exercise my soul,
More caught by melodies than thunders.

I found and own'd the evidences good,
I saw the Testaments were valid,
That New and Old—from Genesis to John—
In all main utterances tallied.

I saw that kings, priests, fishermen, and seers
Had not been guilty of complicity ;
I saw in Christ uprisen from the dead
A fact concreting authenticity.

That fact of facts attested to the death—
By men not hoping to be gainers—
Then deeds and words establishing its truth
Were not the witnessing of feigners.

In Christ I saw the Majesty of God,
In Him the full of our redeeming,
And yet that faith, as fashionably held,
Was bold impiety or dreaming.

I saw the work redemptive was perform'd,
Not still in process of contrival,
That here and now our pardoning is done,
Regeneration and revival.

"Lay hold," says Paul to Timothy, "on life,"
On Christ, immortal and eternal;
The claims of God all satisfied by Him—
What fear of torturings infernal?

My life's been spent in praying to be sav'd;
God says—appropriate salvation;
"Lay hold on life," be grateful for the gift,
And then set on at reformation.

We're told to race—how's racing to be done
The while we're carrying a burden?
The load call'd sin drag-dragging at his back—
What chance has racer of the guerdon?

No race run we for liberty and life,
Which must belong to us at starting;
Plus these—then strive, like Isthmians, for crowns,
Whose bloom has never a departing.

"The Way" to Church is literally Christ—
"The Life," "The Truth," "The Resurrection,"
Thank God for Christ! Love's vivifying gift,
In whom are calling and election.

Of both I'll make—God strengthening me—sure;
He wills no perishing with stubble!
He is—He's Love—though ponderous my cross
And hard my discipline of trouble.

He drave me forth a vagabond from home,
From midst of wickednesses pleasant:
I look with heart-contrition on my past,
I thank, I bless Him for my present!

On Earth's supports too heavily I leant,
He knock'd the whole of them from under,
I fell (His plan) as fainting on His strength—
I woke to ecstasy and wonder.

He raised me up, His Fatherhood reveal'd,
Brought forth a royalty of raiment,
Exchanged my rags for righteousness whose price
Exceeds all estimate of payment.

His tones the while Death's precipice I trod—
A son, a prodigal, a stranger—
Though hard and loud, like thunder in its strength,
But warn'd right lovingly from danger.

Now out on forms, fine ceremonies, rites!
Ornate observances are working
A deep, deep harm, more ruinous to faith
Than comes of scepticism's quirking.

Baptized, confirmed, communicating flocks,
Whose year-round living is impurity,
Drowse, drowse them on from slumber into death
Mid dreams of Heaven and security.

The Church, by law establish'd, may be true
In heart, in conscience to the Master,
But oh, her life! 'tis frivolous and false,
And gives no promise but disaster!

Her year's routine 's so churchily gone through,
That next to nothing she enforces;
I once knew one whose equipage and pair
Was kept by selling her Discourses!

Good men and true are doubtless in her ranks—
Fine men for anybody's honour;
But more she owns whose godliness is gain,
And such bring infamy upon her.

The Church that hush'd and cradled me to sleep,
The while she tended me at Folliton,
Gives here as there but lullaby results
To shame and blame her Metropolitan.

She took the care and nurturing of me—
I've lived no better than neglected ;
No light—but gas, no godliness enforc'd,
No growth nor undergrowth corrected.

Weak half-crown trash, composing one to sleep,
Strong fumes, like Popery and ritual,
God hard and fierce, unreconcil'd to men—
For years this feeding was habitual.

And how can I bow civilly to Church ?
That Church which trifled with my treasure,
My life, my soul, my ev'rything of worth—
How speak or think of her with pleasure ?

That God is Love, now reconciling men
In Christ, the sacrifice and Saviour ;
Who still forgives our trespasses and sins,
For all our cruel misbehaviour ;

Who bids us love Who earlier lov'd us—
Was this the suaveness exerted ?
'Twas not ; though Prayers admitted us as saints,
Discourse assumed us unconverted.

O rouse you, Church of England, and reform !
I'd not infuriate by railing—
But oh, your soul-emaciated flocks,
For want of nutriment availing !

Give up your glare, your incensing, your pomp,
Point hearts not steeple-tops to Heaven,
Don't spoil what should be appetites for life
With sniffs of ceremony leaven !

Set not your heart on buttressing your creeds,
Your Priests all gluttoning for "livings,"
And don't tat-too religion upon skins,
Nor mete men's righteousness by givings !

Don't teach or preach that Churchiness will save,
Don't sell sweet spiritual honey !
Should *you* let pass—salvation's to be bought,
As if 'twere merchandize, for money ?

Proclaim the free forgivenesses of God,
In blank His pardons for the willing,
Whose names if sign'd with nothing but a Cross
Need no more literate in-filling.

Don't treat your flocks to fooleries of form,
Don't cheat your millions to undoing,
Don't let men think they're pious when but strict
To Church and Ministry accruing !

As saints henceforth communicants receive,
Don't doubt positions they have taken ;
Our faith profess'd—what right have you to damn
Us folks in order to awaken ?

As saints in fact deal ever with your Church,
Don't show or tolerate misgiving ;
Like Paul exhort, conciliate, provoke,
For crowns, to rivalries in living.

Don't urge the safe to " Turn ye and be saved ! "
Admit the standing they 've been brought to,
For strong is then your leverage to move
God's saints to serve Him as they ought to.

But perhaps you 'll say, communicants are not
The saints my argument supposes,
That heaps of folks the Sacrament receive
Before God's liberty encloses.

If this you say, you 're parallel with truth ;
The " poms " you deprecate, the " vanities,"
Are not renounc'd when juveniles subscribe
To Confirmationing inanities.

And this should warn you never to conclude
A rite can Christianize a sinner ;
Your board is hedged too carelessly, its guests
Should be numerically thinner.

I'd grieve to see the table of the Lord
With guests diminishing in number—
Increase, say I, the furniture that 's Christ's,
Weed out the perishable lumber.

If but the few communicants are saints,
More shame your table toleration ;
Or say you this—"The whole of them are such"—
Then give their Bible appellation.

Paul wrote to saints, to Churches, and the Church
Which apes so closely the Apostles
Should not unsaint the members she confirms,
For that with orthodoxy jostles.

If Church admits communicants are saints,
Her talk addressing them as sinners
Suggests to souls already in the race—
'Tis time they started as beginners !

The Church but means a company of souls
Redeem'd and following the Master,
And he who tends its wilderness fatigues
Should be no terrifying Pastor.

His work, to cheer, to edify the Church,
The new-born ransom'd ones of Jesus,
Should not be left for damnatory talk
To damp, excruciate, or tease us.

If saints we are, Church thunderings at us
Suggest comparisons with Babel ;
If saints we're not, what business has the Church
To say, "Come hither to the table?"

The Church should treat as Christians her recruits,
To do the contrary's improper ;
But as for Confirmation as a test—
When will her hierarchy stop her ?

A pack of girls pretending to be brides,
Of would-be Benedicts a sprinkle—
A dress affair—Beëlzebub intent
On mask of ugliness and wrinkle.

No end of folks climb robber-like the fold,
From form and ceremony levels,
And this, O Church, your ministers avow
Who treat own'd Christians as the Devil's.

His saints alas, by thousands you allow ;
But should that Christianizing schemer
At will invade your liberties with folks
Who class with infidel and dreamer ?

Receive no more these parodies of saints,
Of true not spurious be netters,
Then treat them all as genuine, and free
In Christ from slavery and fetters.

The great unsaved—preach specially to them,
But spare to herd them with believers ;
Invite them all, with nothing in their hands
To be of ev'rything receivers.

Don't dull or lull men's consciences with creeds ;
Nor Creeds nor Articles will save us ;
Just tell the unbelieving ones of God
And Christ, the substitute He gave us.

God's love to men so witness'd by His Gift—
Don't tell of nothing but His anger ;
Nor yet of pains eternally prolong'd ;
Don't move to ridicule or languor.

Be this your aim—to rescue from the world ;
Forget all quarrelling and party ;
As God has saints who follow not with you—
To such be liberal and hearty.

Away your state, rich revenues, and thrones !
No more such worldliness be aping !
When thus you preach humility, the world
Resents the paradox by gaping.

High time you left carnalities for Christ,
Gave up your Peerages and Lawning ;
Who works for Christ, religiously and well,
Disdains effeminate adorning.

Don't let men's sons go entering the Church
As trade, or promising profession ;
Ask seal of God those candidates to show
Who'd wear your license and impression.

Don't prompt Church Priests to arrogate to selves,
Their pride offensive as their dressing—
The right to form exclusively "The Church,"
That wide wide boundary compressing.

'Tis shame that men, our equals and no more,
Should flaunt in village and in city
Their queer cut coats, of arrogance the signs,
To rouse men's petulance or pity.

The sheep call'd Christ's, when shepherded by sheep,
Are sheep the equals of the shepherds,
But as for these,—sheep worrying suggests
Not sheep attending us, but leopards.

Why sleeves of lawn? why shovel hat and shoes?
And why black pinafores and gaiters?
A suit that smacks of scavengers' attire,
With just a flavouring of waiters'.

Be sure, my Lord, the apron that you wear
Is vain as weathercock on steeple;
It goes—against the stomach of your grace—
Against the stomach of the people.

From whence your pomp, and pageantry, and state?
Is Jew or Infidel its essence?
You ought to know the ritual of show
Is not an authorized excrescence.

Your fine displays, your tailorish conceits,
But make it difficult to bear you ;
O ! why thus cuff and choler us, and prompt
Us ill-used people to " How dare " you !

I owe you nought ; for that which you supplied
At Church and table sacramental,
Was not enough ; you pacified with milk,
Though needs were evidently dental.

Sent forth was I a Christian on the world—
At least that should have been my standing—
Yet when the world came threateningly up,
My bark was broken-down and stranding.

Though nursed at Church, religion I had none—
Was mine the failing, or my teacher's ?
The blame in bulk attaches to the Church,
Her starch stiff piety and preachers.

I left the Church when Folliton was left—
'Twas nought but masonry and mortar !
My faith at large was anybody's horse,
And imps of scepticism caught her.

I charge on Church as much as on myself
My sad alliance with the sceptic ;
For why ? she gave the body of a faith,
She quench'd the spirit antiseptic.

How much is true of Christendom to Christ ?

Ah ! could we tear away the vizard,
Get so-call'd Christianity cropp'd close,
Its locks and ornamentings scissor'd,

I fear me much of atheists in fact

There 'd be astonishing unmasking !
And worst of all are atheists who lie
Where true discipleship is basking.

They own to faith and fellowship with Christ

The while but Christians in the seeming ;
With Him their part ? uncircumcised in heart,
Their faith 's but drivelling or dreaming.

They say long prayers, like heathens, to a God

No more in public than a dead post,
No more, alas ! in private than a myth,
As much Almighty as the bed-post.

The blame that 's here is greatly with the Church,

Herself scarce conscious of the being
Of Him who rules invisibly, but rules
Almost apparent to our seeing.

Her forms and pomps keep numbers of us down

To things obtrusively material ;
They hurt the soul, contaminate its praise—
A mist mistaken for ethereal.

The Church seems blind to atheists and kind—
Her pale gives negative allowal ;
But these, as I, brought Church against the world—
They 'd rat, then blazon the avowal.

The Church divides the credit of my lapse,
My faith denial and desertion ;
With God, who met the atheist and turn'd,
Lies all the merit of conversion.

I bless His name I realize He is ;
That I, till lately but a dreamer,
Have come to life, regenerate in Christ,
The one life-Giver and Redeemer.

I 've found in God, a Father and a Friend,
In all adversity a Brother ;
I know His love, His mercies, and Himself—
Beyond comparison with other.

One week with God, not realized before,
One full confession of backslidings,
One plea, made mine through study of His Word—
O rare intelligence and tidings !

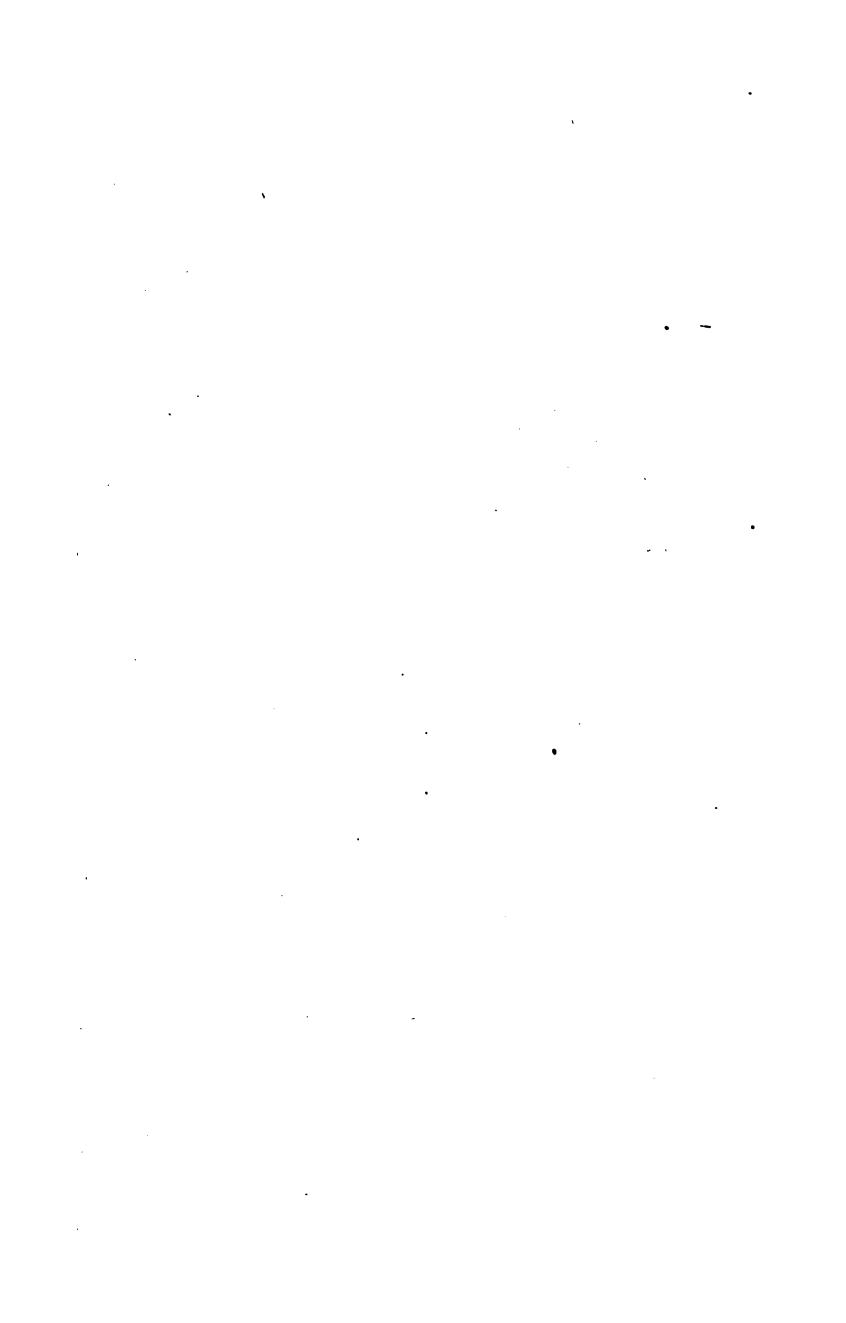
Has brought me now in penitence to Him
Who calls on rebels to surrender,
Has taught me more than anything before,
Of Love compassionate and tender.

God give me grace as journeying I go,
To love, to trust Him as a Father,
To take my cross and bear it in His strength—
Once left for anybody's rather.

O week of weeks ! the truant has been found ;
The sheep recover'd who had wander'd,
The long-lost son been welcomed and excused,
In spite of patrimony squander'd !

This night I go my duty to fulfil ;
God knows the issue of the Reading ;
I ask His help, His blessing on my plan,
I ask His nurturing and leading.

PART THE THIRD.





Part the Third.

“DEAR HAL, my last inform’d you of the fact
That things looked comforting at writing,
And that they did, but as for the result—
‘Flat, stale, unprofitable’—*blighting*!

“My ‘*Scraps from Boz*,’—done formerly at schools,
And twice or thrice at ‘The Mechanics,’—
So well was liked, that confidence I gain’d,
In lieu of modesty and panics.

“I fear me much ’twas vanity gone mad,
That sent me lecturing to strangers ;
I mark’d too well the pleasures and the gains,
I took no notice of the dangers.

“ Because my friends were listeners in crowds,
I here made certain of a bumper ;
I’ve got it too ! in secondary sense,
And hunt vernacular—a thumper !

“ Away down here, my majesty unknown
Has not been courted or respected,
The cits I woo’d cold-shoulder’d me, or else
Supreme indifference affected.

“ No heed gave they to little bills in Caps—
Reminds of previous engagement—
The great, the small, the undersized, the tall,
Took pains to compass my enagement.

“ The Squall and Ball, fix’d later in the month,
Was changed quite suddenly to my night,
The rain came down, though that I might have guess’d,
For Moore had prophesied a dry night.

“ No few, too, met to carry in a snip
At next municipal election ;
A bad misfit, Town-councillings with one
Whose suit so prosper’d my rejection !

“ Without my host, I reckon’d up my gains—
Immense three days before the lecture ;
What, then, possessed the auguries to frown,
Exceeds my powers of conjecture.

“ Five men, three girls, one baby, and a nurse,
Gave six and six to the exchequer !
And thus collapsed this lecturing affair,
Of more than vanity the wrecker !

“ I scarce need say to lecture I declined,
The folks' hot coppers were return'd them,
My gilt-edged bills—five hundred—I arraign'd,
Condemn'd, pass'd sentence on, and burn'd them.

“ I go from hence to-morrow, and I plan
A trip to London for the first time ;
I mean to try new manuscript to sell—
Though now to offer it's the worst time.

“ The Spring's the time book-bargaining to do,
But cash has wofully diminish'd,
And so I go to persecute ' The Row '
To buy the prosiness I've finished.

“ Since I from you went melancholy forth
I've found a Comforter to cheer me,
Whose word's been pledged, far more than I deserve,
Through all calamity to steer me.

“ Such news from me will startle you I know,
You'll fear right jealously a rival,
But don't be shock'd, my Comforter is God,
There's no ungenerous connival.

“ My dear old boy, at Folliton you know
Said prayers, though admirable saying,
With you, with me, were nothing but pretence—
Such prayers mere parodies of praying.

“ The God we served in seeming was to us
As much incredible as fiction ;
A truth on me surprisingly enforced
By God’s best discipline—affliction.

“ Oh Hal, that you—more dangerously placed
Than I, in poverty condition—
Would go to Church through Him who is the Door,
And get sin pardon and remission !

“ Beware, dear Hal, of stigmatizing this
As wish-wash drivelling and ranting ;
Alas, that once we both of us pronounced
Such speech intolerable canting !

“ But cant and rant, detestable and vile,
Were more our personal belongings ;
What else were all our doings at the Church ?
Our sweet smell savourings and songings.

“ Refrains and strains from Choristers in white
May please the musically flighty,
But more of praise, of harmony a less,
Should mark the worship of Almighty.

“ Dear Hal, when next you vocalize at Church,
Just think of Deity’s attention,
And don’t—if none of gratitude is true—
Don’t pass a counterfeit invention.

“ Suppose at Church the harmony goes ill—
If hearts are earnest does it matter ?
’Tis time that hearts put bridles upon lips
And check’d their miserable chatter.

“ ’Tis man who loves the harmony of sound,
God’s ear but listens to the feeling ;
There may be none, though singers are at one
With pipes melodiously pealing.

“ If you ’d but try to realize—GOD IS,
That mere externals but offend Him,
No more you ’d chord in meaningless ‘ Amens,’
No more such vapourings you ’d send Him.

“ Not mov’d by love, the utterance of praise
Is what ? but mouthing and pretending !
Reflect, dear Hal, on Deity attent,
And spare a blasphemous offending.

“ To think of clods but listening to praise
In place of swelling its expression !
Their thanks express’d by deputies who feign,
Or prate, like parrots, the confession !

“ But yet, did clod, in gratitude to God
For all His mercies and compassion,
Sing out for self,—his tunables at fault,
His most excruciating fashion,

“ Would cause the folks to giggle, or expel
That praise exhibitor for brawling ;
Although his voice, and his perhaps alone,
On God's High Majesty was calling !

“ This comes of strains high classical as Bach's
Within Church boundaries permitted ;
The praise, so-call'd, is chanted by the few—
And those—the specially unfitted !

“ The boys in pen, the maidens and the men,
Sing tunes of Tallis's and Boyce's ;
Yet which of all the choristers who bawl
In heart or intellect rejoices ?

“ At Anthem time, all people are agog
To hear the treble or the tenor ;
Too sharp, too flat, intruding upon that
Would gripe like physicking of senna.

“ If all rejoiced, if ev'rybody praised,
The worst discordancy of singing
Would not, as now, be noticed for the swell
Of praise tumultuously ringing.

"In place of tones delectable and few,
In lieu of harmonies fantastic,
We want a multitudinous o'erflow
To shame propriety sarcastic.

"To think of souls—soul deputies of souls—
Set free from penalties for ever
Trit-trotting praise, in musical curvets,
Rehearsed with organ-ized endeavour.

"Just think of God made visible at Church ;
Would praise be offer'd as at present ?
Those bounds remain which usage has set up
Between snobility and peasant ?

"Alike stand these in presence of their God,
Yet mode's Miss 'Miserable Sinner,'
Acts out—'Stand by, I'm holier than thou,
Thou beast carnivorous at dinner !

"'Stand by, stand by, don't push yourself in front ;
Your praise—more bellowing than singing—
Wants time, wants tune, wants polishing, in short
To pigs, not potentates wants flinging !

"'Go get you taught ; proficiency in song
Is indispensable to praising ;
Go clear your rough uncultivated throat
Of inside flannelling and baizing !

“ ‘ You want to show heart gratitude to God !
My man, remember your position !
Don’t dare to come all vulgar as you are !
Do pray consider your condition !

“ ‘ Our God ’s a king, His Majesty so High
Excels all Majesty existent ;
Who comes to Him seeks Majesty at Court,—
Who comes to Court must be consistent !

“ ‘ Put on your best—say “ volubles,” ’twill do,—
Get sounds more codified and fitted ;
Brush up your style, get musically train’d,
Then come to us and be admitted.

“ ‘ You must not praise as if you were alone
Beneath the canopy of Heaven ;
Nor must you roar fresh errings at our door
One day at all events in seven !

“ ‘ For that day’s praise rehearsals must be had ;
’Tis not at all to be expected
You ’ll sing in stole the whiting of your soul
If sing-song psalmody’s neglected !

“ ‘ Now don’t reply ; you cannot sing to-day ;
You spoil all harmony and sweetness ;
You’re not yet fit for critical permit—
We must have decency and meetness !

“ ‘No ! don’t withdraw ; your company we like ;
We don’t speak thus to you to awe you ;
But till your praise is cultured and polite,
You must let others sing it for you !’

“ It comes to this when Canticles and Hymns
By paid professional musicians,
Or unpaid choirs—more frequently our vice—
Repress the multitude’s volitions.

“ I fail to trace analogies assumed
Between Church melodies and praising ;
Whilst Praise is blaze, Church furnaces enforce
The impropriety of blazing !

“ Suppose a man falls overboard at sea,
He’s all a brother though a stranger ;
I dash to save—he’s rescued—and he thanks
His life’s deliverer from danger.

“ With prim display, first practised for a month ?
The pink of elegant behaviour ?
Why, no ; with all his gratitude a-boil,
He thanks just anyhow his saviour.

“ His heart, too full for utterance at first,
First speaks by language universal ;
Hand lock’d in hand, eye eloquent to eye—
No thought of Gregory or Purcell.

“In years ahead, should gratitude endure
And thanks continual be tender'd ;
He sings my praise, not mincingly, but just
As thanks when genuine are render'd.

“When words, mere words, get classically set,
Heart-praise past sentencing is banish'd ;
The soul is gone ; when manner is rehearsed,
The fact of gratitude has vanish'd.

“'Tis nought to God how anybody sings,
The thing He covets is the praising ;
When next you praise, I counsel you, dear Hal,
On God, not music-book, be gazing.

“Your life, by Christ deliver'd from a sea,
Whose deeps obliterate the being ;
Oh let its force true gratitude express—
Acts, words, with impulses agreeing.

“The man-faced jays, whose vapouring at Church
Our best of atmospheres is murking,
What seem they all ? all murderers of praise,
Mass mouths pitch-plasterously burking !

“They form a ring round Deity, a guard
To check unmannerly intruders ;
And they who think that's orthodox, may thank
Themselves for being their deluders.

“ In gauds, in chords, they simulate, they act,
True thanks theatrically feigning ;
Our God the while examining their hearts
And all such offering disdaining.

“ Renounce, dear Hal, such Bumbledom as this !
Lead on formality invaders !
Break through the foe and scatter his array
Of masquerading serenaders !

“ As one of God’s own family approach
His Throne of majesty and favour ;
Sing heart and voice ; but never be the slave
Of song that suffers you to quaver.

“ Don’t fear the God—your rescuer from death—
Who means deliverance from error ;
Be bold, be strong, His graciousness awaits—
He keeps for enemies His terror.

“ We all should come thus trustfully to Him ;
Not some for others of our number ;
It stands to sense that other peoples’ praise
Should not our worshipping encumber.

“ Each man must praise according as he feels ;
For one, I cannot do his thanking ;
For how know I what gratitude he has ?
As much kept secret as his banking.

“ We want some voice—an organ’s if you will—
To start us worshippers together ;
And that’s enough ; out, out upon the praise
That ’s nought but bellowsing and leather !

“ Precentor’s lungs—too flatulent by half !—
Are North monopolists of Psauming ;
While praise-pump South, bipedal’d in the mouth,
Outstorms old Boreas’s storming.

“ Our friend who led at Folliton you’ll mind,
Enforced a modish adoration,
And thus our praise was Hallelu—alas,
A sort of Hallelu-cination !

“ He play’d for pay—some thirty pounds a year ;
His faith—what matter’d its condition ?
But this our crave, that worship should behave,
What odds the faith of the musician ?

“ When *BREVE* resign’d, we advertised,—but then,
As all our worshipping was gammon,
Old Nick of course sent candidates, and we—
Sung praise to leadership of Mammon !

“ And as it was at Folliton, it is
Here, there, and ev’rywhere around us,—
King Sing-Song’s jays come teaching us to praise
And keep us heathens as they found us.

“ You pray for me—I’ll supplicate for you—

But ‘ for ’ means other than ‘ instead of ; ’

Each one must pray, must worship, for himself,

Or face that penalty we’ve read of.

“ King Sing-Song’s jays for teaching us to praise !

Why Hal, what execrable folly !

As well might geese, or advocates of peace,

Instruct in murdering by volley !

“ And that suggests,—what multitudes of men

Dispute on usages liturgical,

Who yet no more are Christians in the fold

Than cut-gut instruments are surgical !

“ What right have men belonging to the world

With rites exclusively the Church’s ?

They cooks should be who’d alter and improve

The soup peculiarly Birch’s.

“ First come to Church—then settle its affairs—

That seems more properly the order :

‘ We do ! we do ! ’ Nay, pardon me, good sirs,

You’re leagued with robber and marauder.

“ The way to Church is only through—the Door !

Through Christ, the solitary entry !

Through Church to Christ, though orthodox, is not

‘ The Way ’ for peasantry or gentry.

“ The Church is not a building of the sort
So near to Heaven as their steeples ;
The Church of Christ means masonry of men,
God’s own regenerated peoples.

“ To these belong the family affairs,
So much the topic of outsiders ;
Who show their spite, spit venom out and fight
Like fly-compassionating spiders !

“ Through Church to Christ ! far better stay away
Than do the seemingly religious !
Through Christ to Church !—and what is the result ?
An end of quarrellings litigious ;

“ A love like God’s ; indifference to sin
As ground of hate against the sinner ;
A cheer to nerve each racer for a crown
To be abundantly its winner ;

“ A heart to pray for enemies who scoff
At grace, eternity, and calling ;
An ear to hear when poverty bewails ;
A hand outstretching to the falling.

“ The fold’s the Church ; the family of sheep—
In Christ the heirs of the Eternal—
Go out and in, find pasturage and peace,
Their guards, God’s ministers supernal.

“ Oh Hal, do try and realize—God is ;
Do cross His hospitable border !
His face in Christ who diligently seeks,
Will find Him Father and Rewarder !

“ I say no more ; forgive me if I wound !
To write you further I ’ll endeavour,
Dear Hal, within a day or two,—meantime,
I ’m yours affectionately ever.”

* * * *

That night I pawn’d appendages and watch ;
Sent on my luggage to the station,
But half-way, intercepted it, and took
Its worth—no, money valuation,

Or, half its worth, from Lazarus, a Jew :—
I hoodwink’d Benjamin, the Slippers,
Or Boots as “ he regarded of hisself,”
Though least of whipper-snapper whippers.

He drove the ’bus, was chambermaid, in fact
Mine host’s factotum at “ The Castle : ”
To him I said, my uncle in the place
Would house my valuable parcel.

I ’d not the wish that “ Castle ” folks should know
I ’d come to poverty and pawning,—
So Jew—half-drunk—took custody of trunk
And wealth within it—“ till the morning.”

'Twas safe with him—far safer than perhaps
It might be, trusted to the Porters ;
“ I think ”—said I—“ I ’ll leave it till I seek
Again these hospitable quarters.”

Kind friends, now please don’t virtuously sneer
At this exemplary uprightness !
The life that lives, though given me, had then
But shown my darkness by its brightness.

Dark nooks were still full numerous within ;
Don’t rate curriculum as finish’d ;
But one short week a happy boy at school
My faults were few of them diminish’d.

I hoped that Boots was thoroughly deceived,
By feint intended to be cunning ;
Yet sure I saw that working of the jaw
Which says, or signifies, “ You ’re funning ! ”

Mine Host of course got scent of my distress,
And changed to vinegar from honey ;
Made out his bill, presented it, and clutch’d
Like Hounslow plunderer the money.

The next day’s meal of course was in the bill,
And quite of course I didn’t get it ;
I left at six, and probably the Boots
Became my substitute and eat it.

In starv'd ill mood I started on my way,
Yet p'rhaps far better off than many,
Although I had to tramp it, for my cash
Was still six shillings and a penny.



PART THE FOURTH.



Part the Fourth.



TEN years ! ten years ! a wilderness of time,
Throughout nor fruitfulness nor blooming ;
A storm-torn waste, all terror and dismay,
And clouds and threatenings and glooming !

I cross'd their line that morning when to Hal
I sent the melancholy letter
To tell how then for London I was bound
My sad predicament to better.

That trip of course had ended in collapse ;
"The Row," its irony annealing,
Declined to buy on any terms, or read
My work on "Literary Stealing."

For ten long years my stratagems for bread—
Best prized when innocent of platter—
How life was tried, was buffeted, upheld,
And how 'twas disciplined—no matter.

I had my health, nor wanted for a meal,
Kept up a passable appearance,
And hopes and thoughts, outriding their distress,
Have still, as formerly, coherence.

My last assay was Africa, where men—
A mix of dirty whites and niggers—
Go to and fro the cradle and the grave,
And dig like cemetery diggers.

I join'd their hunt for diamonds, and one
Perhaps in twenty was successful ;
The claim next mine was wonderfully rich,
My mine discouragingly less full.

'Twas not for me to prosper, though I work'd
My claim as earnestly as any ;
I did my best, hard labouring for months,
Then left scarce richer by a penny.

That gives in brief my history, my life,
A blend of venturings and failures ;
No climes to me propitiously inclined,
Though tried from England's to Australia's.

I've roam'd, for nought, from Beersheba to Dan—
To use a metaphôr expressive—
Then back from Dan to Beersheba again,
By ways perplexing and digressive.

I've spann'd the world ; through weather at its
worst
I've gone the limits of its measure ;
And now I tread old Liverpool once more,
My wealth, but poverty and leisure.

Last news from Hal, deliver'd at the Cape,
Bears date the seventh of November,
And now 'tis just the finish of July—
Ten years from parting, come September.

He's now a man of standing, with a seat ;
How strange both parents have departed !
The space between grows wider as I think
On facts that possibly have started.

New friends, maybe, have congregated round,
New ties more suitable than olden ;
I fear to mind of friendship in the past,
Of bands once symbolized by golden.

I shrink to think this Pipe of his retains
More close unitedness than ours :
Alas ! alas ! no threatenings have gloom'd
Like this which imminently lowers !

And yet, why fret ? our interchange has been
As if but yesterday we'd spoken ;
It can't be fact he's hypocrite to me !
That links so promising are broken !

He's true as steel ! a plague upon the fears
Whose hints should never have been heeded !
I read again his satisfying words
And proof of constancy's unneeded.

" Dear Ted, you are a marvel of a man !
Please say where next you wish a letter,
At Prague, Canton, Connecticut, Brazil,
At Rome, at Wapping, or Rosetta ?

" Your ' Wants to know,' of Folliton, surprise ;
I thought I'd mention'd in my former,
I'd left the place for atmosphere that got
From hot to tropically warmer.

" My dad's decease, six years and more ago,
Made me an object of attention ;
A fact your home cross-questioning, alas,
Compels my modesty to mention !

" The big Papas of eligible girls
All but demanded me in marriage,
They praised my port, their daughters did the
same—
But their equivalent was carriage !

“ So bored was I, so slaver’d and beset,
The praise so obviously double—
Less aim’d at me than pointed at my pelf—
Such soap, vacuity and bubble,

“ That not too soon, with feelings of disgust,
The house I’d rented I deserted ;
And thus the fate intended to be mine
Itself was altar’d and averted.

“ I don’t know why, but seemingly your friend
Is not like others to get married ;
No girl escorts this critter to the Church
Unless he’s chloroform’d and carried !

“ I’ve sat me down at Walsington for life,
The place we all of us were born at ;
I’ve friends a few, but intimates I’ve none,
Nor rich man’s sycophants to yawn at.

“ My time, you’ll say, drags heavily, but no,
Each day’s entanglements employ me,
Enough and more to occupy my thoughts,
And nought worth naming to annoy me.

“ My large estate has burden’d me with work,
Wherein is ecstasy of pleasure,
I want but—stay ; come, *who* now do you think
Would brim my solitary measure ?

“ I’ve been for years improving my domain,
I’ve tried my hand upon the people,
We’ve lots, alas, of ignorance and vice,—
And deep’s the shadow from the steeple !

“ I still revere and bless you for the words
That set me studying the Message,—
A Law more rare than formerly engaged,
More rich in promises and presage.

“ No Lord Chief robes—no Chancellor’s degree—
But just a steward of The Master,
In faith and hope, when stewardship’s fulfill’d,
Of scope that’s worthier and vaster.

“ ‘ WELL DONE ’—from Him, my Rescuer, my God,
Is all I labour for and covet ;
There’s not a wealth that’s matchable with that,
On earth, or under, or above it.

“ My days are spent in visiting the sick,
The poor, disconsolate, and dying ;
Yet not of course with any such idea
As life by charitables buying.

“ ‘ The Life ’—mine own, the virtue and the gift
Of Christ, my Substitute and Saviour,
I try to show heart gratitude by words,
By deeds, by Christian-like behaviour.

“ Such full account we each of us must give
Of ‘ pounds ’ wherewith we are entrusted,
That I—I keep, God helping me, a vow
To shun depravities I lusted.

“ My wealth my God’s—my energies are lent
To rule its equitable using ;
May He direct—He evermore—that I
May ne’er be guilty of abusing.

“ I wish, dear Ted, your wanderings were o’er,
That God in mercy would exempt you—
But no,—I ’ll not continue,—I refrain,
I spare to influence or tempt you.

“ But when He wills, how joyfully shall I
Once more, poor wanderer, behold you !
And till we meet, I supplicate His love
To keep, to nourish, to enfold you.”

Possess’d of this—how, how could I suppose
In Hal’s affection there was changing !
Dear, dear old Hal, our unity’s intact,
There’s no suspicion of estranging !

I went to work, and wrote him on the spot ;
I ask’d—all businesses permitting—
If he, just then cash wealthier than I,
Would make to Liverpool a flitting ?

But that imposs : I'd hurry off to him ;
No doubt all Folliton would scent it,
And if old spite all Folliton could vent,
No doubt all Folliton would vent it.

“ I stay ”—wrote I—“ in Liverpool a week,
And then, God favouring, I ship me
For lands as yet unvisited, in hope
At length prosperity may tip me.

“ Until we meet, confessions I forbear ;
I've heaps to tell that will astonish ;
And much I fear the narrative may cause
My friend to censure and admonish ! ”

He'll blame my love of wandering, no doubt,
My lack of constancy at labours ;
For few believe how difficult's the way
Which seems so easy to one's neighbours.

There's nought of blame attachable to me
That rafts I ventured on went under ;
What rafts the gleams of Providence reveal'd
Were rent by Providence asunder.

How oft do men, prize-winners in the world,
Turn round and execrate the losers !
Yet ships but built, like Billy-boys, to crawl,
How can they emulate the cruisers ?

There's six-foot-three, a greyhound of a man ;
What's three-foot-six against him ever ?
Long wins, of course, then doubles upon Short
With—" Slug, why didn't you endeavour !"

The stags exclaim, " The bushes are on fire !
Up, up ye tortoises, and flee do !
Why don't you run ! sloths, idiots and fools,
Why don't you scamper it as we do !"

It's quite absurd,—says Blanchard, in his sketch,—
That men long-legg'd enough to pass you
Should cry, " Be fleet !" to tortoises who can't,
And then, " Infatuated ass !" you.

" A way there is, wherever there's a will :"
So says Broad Acres to the seedy—
" Go work !" he cries, to labourer in vain,
And that's *his* feeding of the needy !

A few, like ships, are clipper-built for speed,
A few, like pleasure-yachts, for vanity,
But tubs and logs at mercy of the tide,
Describes both races of humanity.

Live tubs, but strive in one another's way,
Ill winds perplexing their endeavour,
They bump, they drift, or anchoring their warps
Though strong inevitably sever.

When tides are right, such elements oppose
As sink or hurry them to wrecking ;
What waifs and strays do weather the distress
That rule nor altering nor checking.

Where Wealth exclaims—"Deficiency of will !"
I say—Deficiency of power !
Some grapes are all comeatable and sweet,
Whilst some are out of reach and sour.

It's not the thing for gentlefolk, whose climb
To lap of luxury was easy,
To rate poor me for failing at a pole
As poll of butcher-boy as greasy.

Some pegs of legs seem following the fays
By ways luxuriously levell'd,
The rest, like flesh, but subsequently foul'd,
Seem foul'd on purpose to be devil'd.

As if the sport of mischievous decoys,
Ill-will'd for compassing their ruin,
They splash, they dash, tormented and beset,
Like wasp-accelerated Bruin.

By nips and stings or madden'd or dismay'd,
All roads they happen on are wrong ones,
They sink—in last extremities of course—
And then—they're booted by the strong ones !

A way there's *not*, wherever there's a will ;
Or I should long ago have found it ;
The way to wealth I hazard but to find
Some flood calamity has drown'd it.

Am I to blame? I, destiny's divert?
Not I! 'tis miserable cricket
When Fortune bats round-handers into flats,
And keeps one balling at the wicket.

All Fortune scores gets counted to her friends ;
'Tis she's at bottom of their winnings ;
Whilst they look on, the drudgery is done
By us who never had an innings.

We try—we fail ; that's beggary to us,
And all its opposite to others ;
Whilst some get rich, the losers do the work
That ends in separating brothers.

For well-a-day, prosperity that's ours
Were work but properly rewarded,
Too oft gets made the handle of a whip
That's most unmercifully corded !

The full-blown Drone, big, bouncable and brusk,
So rich in spite of his neglecting,
Pooh, poohs, the hard life labouring of all
Who fail like fortunes in erecting.

"Eyes right"—says he—"and Will a willing horse,
'igh-ways don't indicate a casting!"
Says poor Retort—"Quit quiet glass of port,
And try *my* water-creases, fasting!"

Work, proof of will,—ways, wicket-kept and few,
Of balls, in cricket phrase, a blocking—
This, this, ye rich, exhibits in its truth
Distress you aggravate by—"Shocking!"

The wights ye blame for laziness, which keeps
Selves, wives and families, a-starving,—
If such but had the product of their toil—
You 'd be for quartering and halving!

There's scarce a man that's "sleek and well-to-do"
But thrives on other people's sorrows;
His pile's built up of bricks he neither makes,
Nor buys, nor supplicates, nor borrows.

Against his will—for certainly his will—
Has strong antipathy to labour—
Potosi's bricks come tripping it to him
Away from fashioner and neighbour.

That sort of way, that substitute for will,
Is not for wooers that importune:
"Too free by half"—says Fortune to her pests,
"My name to strangers is *Miss-Fortune*!"

Whilst slim-built Will is beaten by a leg—
P'rhaps black, the oftenest at winning—
His next friend Strong is always "going wrong"
In ways which end at the beginning.

A, has the will, but hasn't the physique ;
B, stands for Both of them united ;
But where 's his chance, when Fortune blocks the
way,
And keeps him tantalized or slighted ?

P'rhaps A, p'rhaps B, is parallel with me ;
My life, all labouring and driving,
Goes back, in spite hard struggles to get on—
And oh, the hopelessness of striving !

Yet should I fret, grow angry, or complain ?
Be dull, dissatisfied, rebelling ?
Ah no ! 'tis well when wilderness stands out,
Itself, ungrateful and repelling.

Oh let me learn whatever my estate
Therewith, like Paul, to be contented ;
All things but work together for my good,
And Love that solace has cemented.

I'll work, I'll wait ; if Providence has plann'd
But bread, but water, with the needy,—
God's will be mine ; such dieting may mean
I've tastes too covetous and greedy.

If life just now proved luscious and enough,
The thought of leaving it were sorrow ;
For true, too true, the pleasures of to-day
Do blind one's vision to to-morrow.

I'm kept impress'd by wilderness surrounds,
All dark and barren and affrighting,
That these but form my temporary home,
My school whose wronging me is righting.

If school seems rough, 'tis evidence direct
That God, the Orderer, is fitting
For place of trust in Kingdom that's to come,
Skill'd work, and adequate acquitting.

One can't believe that buffetings one gets
Are nought but objectless chastisings ;
If that were so, one's quarrellings with woe
Would seem appropriate arisings.

If He who rules sends discipline severe,
He states the preciousness of trials ;
That so—what then ? time future has the key
Of all life's sorrows and denials.

I bow, I bend ; God chastens whom He loves,
For ends beneficent though hidden ;
Yet this we know,—who suffers with his Lord,
Will share His Glory with the bidden.

How weak am I ! now polishing my arms,
And next forgetting I possess them ;
Bold, bold 's the thought, but cowardly 's the act,
For fears uprising I caress them !

Some vaunt their peace, cut patterns of it off,
And pair with other folks their matches ;
But peace, my peace, 'tis fleeting as the dream
That next day's thinking on detaches !

I 've felt its sway, have anchor'd in its rest,
Been lost in ecstasy and wonder ;
Then faith—my stay, has parted like a thread,
And then—toss, turbulence and thunder.

I 've had my storms, and safety from their rage ;
I 've felt the consciousness delightful
That God, my God, was Master of them all,
Though fierce their threatenings and frightful.

O Thou, my life's security and hope,
The waves, the billows of affliction,
Controll'd in all their violence by Thee,
Have work'd but weight of benediction !

Still, still I am ; an argosy preserved,
Held back from injury and stranding ;
Rejoice my soul, for greater than the storm 's
The " peace that passeth understanding !"

Anon, I've feared the threatenings without,
Then bask'd in quietness unruffled ;
The mind at rest, scarce noticing the roar
External, dangerless and muffled.

A brief respite—oh, would it were a life's !—
And then old agonies of fearing ;
Relapse from faith to faithlessness ; and thoughts
Of Hell's own witnesses a-jeering.

Forgive, O Lord, involuntary fears ;
I know no enemy can harm me ;
Yet flesh—so weak, will hesitate and fail
When friends, not enemies, alarm me.

I shame to think on quaverings and doubts,
On flesh and spirit dereliction ;
I know I'm safe—I tremble, I despair—
Ah me ! the wretched contradiction !

The gift's bestow'd—'tis everlasting life,
In Christ, the Author and the Giver,—
And this I clutch, though trials it involves
Whereat I timorously shiver.

Oh why ? The Book whose authorship's Divine
Foretells these hurricanes which shake me !
Oh why these fears ? when Deity's my friend,
A friend unable to forsake me !

I know, I feel, the Fatherhood of God,—
But flesh awes spirit till it trembles ;
And he who boasts long intervals of Peace
Methinks but palters and dissembles.]

How like my state to Peter's on the sea ;
Now brave and careless of the dinning—
And now appall'd ; faith following the eyes,
And then the wavering beginning.

I see the scope of trials, and my faith
Would fain be steadier and stronger :
Then God of Faith, invigorate, sustain,
Till Faith's my exercise no longer !

The School of Christ I enter'd when He gave
My soul new consciousness of being,
Nor would I now from lessons and reproofs
Be found irrationally fleeing.

If day by day one's trials are severe,
The back's well fitted for the burden,
And then—the Transformation Scene at last !
The King, the Glory, and the Guerdon !

The woes of time, all penalties of sins
Enforce the wickedness of sinning ;
Lord, hold me up, and so shall I be safe,
My crown victoriously winning.

When once I chafed at crosses which I bore,
God changed the whole of them for vaster :
His Name be praised that bearing them was made
To end in following the Master !

What He partook 'tis dignity to share,
With Him high privilege to suffer ;
But, ah, for us past martyrdoms have smoothed
A way once heavier and rougher !

Old griefs, old cares, but startled me away
Where foes more terrible beset me,
I flew from God, yes consciously, and then
Of course man's adversaries met me.

Now, ill's assaults shall hurry me at once
To claim the Holy One's protection ;
I'll fly to Christ, Humanity's ally,
And God's own image and reflection.

My faith—scarce faith, so powerless, so weak,
Of peace less giver than diminisher—
Henceforth shall be my argument in chief
With Christ, faith's fashioner and finisher.

What can one do, when questionings arise,
By foes insidious suggested,
But fly to God, man's Comforter, his Help,
His Faith, when fealty is tested !

I bless my God—reveal'd to us as Love—
The while He keeps me in probation,
For all His care, hard lessons, and restraints,
For all His priceless education.

He means to make me lovable, and that
When I'm all loving will be finish'd ;
The end I see, nor would I by a jot
Have aught of discipline diminish'd.

The royal Law, Law's centre and surround,
Is love to Deity and neighbour,
Which Church and World—both militant—enforce
By dint of canon-aid and sabre !

And e'en by us—God's family on earth,
So prone to orthodox profession—
We talk of love intelligently well,
And then—a selfish retrogression !

And this in spite of principles supposed
New lives to animate and strengthen ;
Some cords of love whose province is to draw
Seem good for nothing but to lengthen !

The truth we hold we fulminate abroad
Like locomotives at a station—
Blow off our steam to compensate by noise
For lack of motive application.

To love in word is anybody's work,
Skin-deep its perishable beauty,
To love in deed, though liking us to God,
Seems scarce a pleasurable duty.

I've talked of love and fancied it mine own,
But when I contemplate my living
I see but this—self occupied with self,
Much more for getting than for giving.

I pick from men a specimen—myself,
Nor worse nor better than another,
And self I see monopolist where self
Should first be thinking of his brother.

Self lives for self ; gold-feathering his nest,
He gives of overplus remaining
A thrifty dole to mitigate distress,
Which looks—*is* charitable feigning.

A thrifty dole, yes, verily,—for days
Ahead may some of them be rainy ;
To take no thought for morrows that may gloom !
Go mate with idiot and zany !

When once the rich gave this way of their wealth
An Eye that pierced them was attending,
And when two mites—a widow's and her all,
Whose faith, like Jacob's, was depending

On God the Lord for furnishing her board
With just provision for the morrow,—
Were both resign'd an offering to God,
Far less in anger than in sorrow

The Lord of all spoke scathingly in blame
Of gifts but Charity in seeming,
And said *her* gift—hers only of the whole—
Sweet breath to Deity was streaming.

No means I've had—thank Providence for that !
To deal unrighteously with riches,
But will's been good to lavish them on self,
To leave God's needy in their niches.

How kind to me that impulses like mine—
So wrong, so selfishly inclining—
Should all have felt that cruellest of curbs,
A purse not furnish'd with a lining !

May God incline my being to Himself,
Destroy these character degraders,
Or be my strength the victory to win
When press'd by covetous invaders.

Who shuts his heart to indigence around,
If not a Deity denier,
Is worse than he ; for worshipper of God
Who hates his brother is a liar.

Who loveth not the brother he hath seen,
With whom in fellowship he dwelleth,
How can he love that Hidden One from sight,
That Love whose nature he repelleth ?

Faith works by love, that sinners may become
Like Him who suffer'd to redeem them :
Faith works by hate, and many of us keep
God's laws like devils who blaspheme them.

The love of self, supposing it o'erflows,
But gives a dribble to its neighbour :
The love of friends, of enemies, ah me,
That 's love's procrastinated labour !

The God with whom my future's to be spent
I must, ere meeting Him, resemble :
Then up my soul, nor linger as of kin
With fiends who've faith enough to tremble !

I fain would be as Deity designs,
Of nought but wickedness the hater ;
I yearn to live—a creature to the praise
Of Love, all creaturehood's Creator.

How all these years I've covetously sought
What men call riches and position,
While God but gave—He promised me no more—
Such things as fitted my condition.

I've not been fit for stewardship and so
For me no custody of treasure ;
Had I been Hal my "talents" had been spent
On soul-demoralizing pleasure.

No doubt but wealth, placed trustingly with me,
By me had long ago been squander'd ;
And I the while belonging to the flock
Of Christ, should culpably have wander'd.

With gifts a few—p'rhaps liberal in look—
Yet disproportion'd to resources,
My self-praised soul had pacified its qualms,
And dull'd its spiritual forces.

And then that growth call'd "spiritual pride"
Had found congenial pollution ;
Pope pious I, at piety's expense—
All bull and mouthy allocution !

And then that unintelligent display,
For love so frequently mistaken,
That wild attempt by ticketing the poor
To cure their spiritual bacon.

But pride of heart associate with wealth,
Though great at godlessness perceiving,
Is not the grace whose blossomings enforce—
"And be not faithless but believing !"

Man's pride of heart, conspicuous in gifts
That ring like ha'pennies on flagging,
Makes call to Christ metallical and hard—
All self, self-righteousness, and bragging.

A man may give his body to be burn'd,
May give more liberal donations
To feed the poor than Peabody's bequests,
And yet, though plentiful ovations—

The praise of men—give honour to his name
And "nine-days'-wonder" popularity,
The whole may be but selfishness because
Of one thing wanting in it—Charity !

No end of men, yes Christians in the fold,
Whose faith is saving though it's fruitless,
Give gifts which speak such barrenness of love
As marks the piety that's rootless.

They give in vague uncharitable mood
Of goods committed to their keeping,
The love of souls more hidden than express'd,
Christ love, inanimate or sleeping.

Relieve the poor ! undoubtedly we should ;
But Priest palavering and salving—
Endured because accompanied by gifts—
That's not relieving them, but starving !

The man in need wants helping to the foods
That give the healthiest nutrition ;
The soul that's sick wants feeding with the Bread
That saves the sinner from perdition.

To do the one, the other to neglect,
Is now the ultimate of fashion :
To feed the poor and physic them with Church
Seems less a trouble than a passion.

We do neglect the ministry of Christ
When ends sectarian impel us :
Him—Him alone—our doings should exalt,
Whate'er Church proselyters tells us.

The Church that's call'd so pertinently—High,
That monks and friars it in shoddies,
Its cure of souls when properly described
Is cure by fattening them of bodies.

It turns Relieving Officer to get
The poor to Evensong and Matins,
And when they're got—they're puzzled to pronounce
If Priests are Britishers or Latins !

The shirk-work poor—the oftenest in need—
Rejoice when goody people fasten
On them and theirs benevolent regards
And send donations by the Parson.

They don't approve when Magistrates receive
Our free-will offerings for paupers,
For then such just distributings are made
As don't feed sluggishness and torpors.

The Priest's weak eyes, so easily deceived,
Detect no laziness among them ;
He gives—they take, preferring to the Law's
The Church peace-officer to tongue them.

Bur how come Priests our almoners of gold ?
'Tis we, not deputies, should give it ;
If Paul, James, John, authorities we own—
Let's learn their godliness and live it.

If men may praise, may supplicate, may give,
By means relieving them of trouble—
Then good they don't is selfishness and ease
And "pure religion" but a bubble.

The poor like Priests—Priests utilise the poor ;
High Church the common people feeding
Exclaims—"You Low Church indolents observe
How we go leavening and creeding !"

And that's the truth ; yet leavening the lump
But means concealing in its flour
A taint that spreads corruption through the mass
Till all smells feculent or sour !

High Church may brag of mendicants she draws—
Enticed by bribery to follow—
But faith that ends in Churchiness alone
Is vain, illusory and hollow.

But does such end in Churchiness alone ?
What more distinguishes the teaching ?
A so-so show, with supplement, alas,
Of Rome's pomposity and preaching !

Three times a day performances gone through ;
The test of absolute dependence,
On Him who died us sinners to redeem—
At Church a regular attendance !

This sort of thing makes piety a farce ;
It deals with mortals as with tables—
No faith receives the polish of a faith
Whose best realities are fables !

To make of men idolaters of Church
Is not what's taught us by The Master ;
The sheep of Christ, if followers of Him—
What odds Communion or Pastor ?

Long done away are sacrifice and priest,
Yet High Church ceremonies palter
With God, with men, by imbecile returns
To Priest Judaical and Altar !

High Church but makes a handle of the poor
To push own interests sectarian ;
And we're to blame who delegate to Priests
To aid the woe-begone vulgarian.

“We've not the time !”—say rather, not the taste ;
Suppose a gratifying pleasure—
Time scarce for that—we make it, as we say,
Nor stint the luxury we measure !

High Church! High Mass! High Festivals! High
Fumes!

High Wine—*well* qualified for drinking !
So High, so High, what wonder it receives
The Low appellative of—stinking !

It makes of men, good formalists, and then
Parades its marvellous successes !
But what avails a piety put on ?
Does God judge worshippers by dresses ?

There's nought of faith belonging to outside,
Unless it indicates what's in us :
If hearts are ice, will mimicking a thaw
The crowns imperishable win us ?

The proud in heart make capital of works—
Bread, Coals, Soup, Baby-linen, Dinners—
But baits like these, nor benefit themselves,
Nor make Christ followers of sinners.

High Church may trap the famishing by gifts
And works made popular by Dorcas—
And when that's done—what's afterwards begun?
We're black and Romanizers chalk us.

Had wealth been mine its influence on me
Had made me Pharisee in duty;
My gifts to men complacently review'd
Had won my worship of their beauty.

I p'rhaps had stopp'd at getting men to Church
By means of pampering their bellies;
Of this lost sight—that Church without The Light
One way to perishing in Hell is.

Thank God, thank God, for poverty! that hands
Have not been furtherers of vices:
I've bought a grand experience and—no,
I don't stand murmuring at prices.

Ten years! ten years! a follower of Christ
And yet till hitherto so selfish!
How worse than slow one's graces are to grow
When all one's appetites are pelfish.

God's ways with men—how different from man's!
Don't end with dinnerings and teaings;
He gives them Light, Love, Holiness and Faith,
He feeds, not stultifies, their beings.

He loves with love unchangeable, He loves—
Much loves the enemies who hate Him,
He loves beyond all estimate, He loves
Where men's ingratitude await Him.

And oh, God's love to imitate ; to feel
At one with Deity in kindness,
To love who now—*our* vision being dark—
Indeed are sufferers from blindness.

To keep down self, to labour, to be spent
For good of needy ones around us !
And all are such in this respect or that
E'er since man's adversary found us.

O Thou who art, whose attributes but tell
Of Love Omnipotently flowing,
Bid, bid my heart come nestle to thine own—
That rest its solitary knowing !

And oh to catch Thy Charity ! to ray
Its warm invigorating power
To where Thou wouldst—from garden of The Lord
To waste and devil-smitten flower !

Like Thee I'd hate the filthiness of sin
And love right lovingly the sinner ;
I'd be to men Thy messenger, O Lord—
To Christ's security a winner.

O give me leave ! and fortify my heart ;
For work thus enter'd on is rather—
Unless Thy strength keeps motives in the right—
Our work than business of Our Father.

'Tis strange no word yet reaches me from Hal ;
But three days left to me of seven ;
And funds at low—I wonder when they'll flow
To me from Westminster and Devon.

But ah, there growl'd the demon Discontent—
No more my counsellor for ever ;
God's will—not mine ! old leanings I resign
In spite their cling-to-me endeavour.

Is Hal the same in figure and in look—
Or has he alter'd much in either ?
Will each confess the other at a glance—
Or—I so different—will neither ?

His soul I know, ay, even as I'm known ;
But there ! our intercourse—by letter
So free, so frank—at meeting will it show
In old time liberty or fetter ?

For me—I long to see him and I dread !
New thoughts which soberly demean us
Express'd so well in letters that have pass'd
May prove but barriers between us !

The new Christ-life inhabiting my soul
Has such timidity about it—
So ties my tongue, so hides itself from sight
That some not ranted at might doubt it !

In still, lone place, where only the Supreme
Beholds and listens, I can utter
Or prayer, or praise—but others looking on
I'm all shame-facèdness and stutter !

Amazed I hear our Ministers and Priests
Express in public as in private
The faith they hold—so eloquent, so bold—
For I—I cannot so contrive it !

Of free, smooth speech, like Moses, I'm bereft ;
My faith some hiding-place would try for ;
I can't express one syllable to men .
Of Him I willingly would die for !

I'm not ashamed of Jesus ! but I crave
Much less to talk about than live Him ;
Himself gave He a sacrifice for me—
And life, love, ev'rything I'd give Him !

I've ask'd to go God's messenger to men,
To win sin's sinners to the Saviour :
Alas ! alas ! such missionary work's
Ill served by reticent behaviour.

•

And yet I burn God's messages to bear—
Oh if He'd qualify and send me !
Be with my mouth—make eloquent and wise—
And send bright angels to attend me !

God's Word in hand, His love within my heart,
I'd seek the wretched and the stricken,
Give up my crust poor misery to feed,
And pray man's Comforter to quicken.

I'd hie me forth such advocate of Church
As Church call'd "National" cold-shoulder's :
No Nice ice creeds to petrify men's hearts
Till hard as iron-heavy boulders ;

But Christ alone, the Shepherd and the Door,
The Priest—none other one existing—
The Way to God, long finish'd and complete,
For all the scavengers assisting ;

I'd tell of Him at Deity's right hand,
Man's Intercessor in the Heavens,
Alone his hope,—not present in our wines,
Our Chris-cross waferings, nor leavens.

'Tis sad to see bend only of the knee,
That glance, not Heaven-ward but rafter-ward,
That faith in works for justifying souls—
That first which properly comes afterward.

The grace in hand, then follow the results—
Good works—of gratitude the fruiting ;
Good works in front, as cart before the horse,
Should get not honouring but hooting.

The work's been done which merits the release
From Death—the penalty impending ;
The part of men—sent pardons to receive,
And then be grateful for the sending.

O Lord of Life, to separate thy flock .
From foods not nourishing but harming !
To shake men free from fripperies which be—
Although tom-fooleries—alarming !

Pernicious trash in doctrinal attire,
Allied with trinkettings to please us—
To think that these should wizard men away
From man's one Justifier, Jesus !

The more we're Church'd the deeper do we get
Involved in doing what is useless :
Our greed is Life—but sucking it from forms
But proves such delicacies juiceless.

The Life is Christ ; and lingering our time
Where nought but Churchiness is growing—
We Life exchange for perishable gauds,
And reap according to our sowing.

The Tunes, the Priests, the Flowers and the Fumes,
The Books, the Choristers, the Ritual—
The whole display estranges us from God,
And makes forgetting Him habitual.

The Book of Books, supposing that it came
Between my spirit and its Maker,
E'en it I'd hold more enemy than friend,
And be—and rightly—its forsaker :

For 'tis not it I worship and exalt !
The Book—what is it to the Writer ?
Let's love the Book, but only for its news
Of God Our Father the Inditer !

What charms the sense is ruinous to faith ;
Our minds if Heaven-ward inclining
Had best shut out what's sensual and gross—
Or faith's mere vapouring and whining !

Against my will I'm noting when at Church
Who's late, who's early in arriving :
Ay, e'en the books, the hassocks, that I use,
Seem all God's mockery conniving !

I fain would rise, my spirit to my God's,
I fain would stimulate digressors
To praise, to pray, in spirit and in truth,
As should Christ-honouring professors.

To Church ! to Church ! that coming won't avail !
Come, come to Jesus—the Redeemer !
Be that my call if ever I go forth
To rouse the sluggard and the dreamer !

But see—there goes the Omnibus ; the Mail's
To time ; I'll see if there's a letter :
So oft I've ask'd—'twixt Hal and I and Post,
The Post will post me its besetter !

* * * *

“ 2 Prigman's Court, Knight-rider Street, E.C.,
July the thirtieth. With sorrow
We send you word—deferring our details
In hope of seeing you to-morrow—

“ That Albert Brown, of Walsington, Esquire,
Is now no longer with the living ;
We grieve to state three days ago he died
The while directions he was giving

“ To Jones, his groom, to drive him to the train.
It seems your letter, unexpected,
Brought on a wild commotion of the heart—
For long unhealthily affected—

“ And e'er the help of Doctors could be got,
Before the messengers had started,
Before a soul could hurry to his aid,
'Twas plain his spirit had departed.

“ Excuse delay in forwarding the news,
But when we ask’d for your direction
’Twas quite unknown—nor would it have been found
Had chance not led to its detection.

“ This day at noon your letter—not supposed
A thing of consequence—extracted
Defaced and torn, from hand of the deceased,
Gave where to find you and we acted.

“ We’re just in time by telegram to state—
With hope to-morrow you ’ll be present—
Inter at two—read Will upon return—
For you both sorrowful and pleasant.

“ Should train be late we ’ll meet you at the vault ;
Ask way to Allardyce’s Pillar.”
To Edward Lamb, at Liverpool P.O.
From Grynde, M’Adamant and Griller.

* * * *

Dead—buried—gone ! I—heir to his estates !
Alas, my more to me than brother,
Thy place though fill’d more vacant will appear
When Need beholds in it another !

I’ve scarce the nerve this letter to peruse,
Address’d to me among his papers :
“ *For private eye* ”—ah, how have I been worn
By bores of parasites and gapers !

“ My dear dear Friend,—This missive is to tell
That I—in prospect of the hour
When God shall please to summon me—assign
To you my property and power.

“ The wealth that I ’m entrusted with is yours
When I ’m no longer its controller ;
For strange to say, the heir to it was lost
In lat-i-tatitudes—not Polar,

“ Though cold to hopes, as Russia, when it ’s froze,
To all Russ noses is and toes is ;
But not to fog—of Chancery he died,
And here what ’s left of him reposes.

“ There ’s not a soul I know of in the world
Whose right of kinship is giving
Those wrong regards of kinsman in his way
Which prompt out-lawing or out-living.

“ My spark of life I ’ve vigorously proved
In health by—keeping up my smoking !
And leave to you, well knowing what I do,
All else my properties but—*joking*.

“ Alas, my friend, that habit is my bane !
My life, my labours, it defaces !
To trick with puns fair Godliness’s form,
But mocks, dishonours and disgraces.

“I’d half a mind this letter to destroy,
And write less flippantly another,
But then I thought, no, evil may be wrought
If pains thus pricking me I smother.

“My friend shall know ; his fancies, like mine own,
Have been too intimate with levity ;
Our ‘soul of wit,’—no creditable fit—
Let’s dwarf to nothingness from ‘brevity.’

“Long ugly jaws, pit-stomach-achy groans,
And eyes—Niagara’s for streaming,
All this I loathe ; thus piety to clothe,
But courts a choleric blaspheming.

“But need we pass the opposite extreme
To show we nauseate the groaners ?
If that avails, then swallowing of whales
Should mark non-sympathy with Jonahs !

“Full tides of health and happiness that come
From new-born holiness of being
Should not display a humour that in fact
Is nought but prankishness and spreeing.

“It ill befits with godliness to show
A light demeanour ; and I sorrow
The while I think God’s Scriptures are profaned
By men who scruple not to borrow

“ From word they preach the pointing of a joke,
The pith, the marrow, of a riddle ;
I’ve heard such wights—May-meeting-house de-
lights—
Play inspiration like the fiddle !

“ ’Tis sad to see God’s ministers so free ;
Their should-be pattern elocution,
Anon a stream, clear glory of Supreme,
Anon—a sickening pollution !

“ With you, with me, with others our repeats,
Whose mark’d proclivities are punning ones,
We get no good, but greatly the reverse,
When God’s evangelists are funning ones.

“ The mood I blame encouraged, why it gets
From bold to impudent ; it touches
From low to high ; not anything escapes
Its filth communicating clutches.

“ If men we love and reverently hear
Go straight from sacred to hilarious,
We, too, o’erleap safe limits we should keep—
And take their Pegasus to carry us !

“ As ill communications but corrupt
The tone and tendency of manners,
Let’s live to God, such letters to His praise
As can’t demoralize the scanners !

“ But Mentor mine—thy pardon I implore !
I ’ve jump’d from pupilage to teaching !
Forgive thy friend, forgetting his advance,
Too rash, from listening to preaching !

“ Again I own indebtedness beyond
What tongue, pen, anything, can mention ;
To you I owe that wakening to life
That proved the Higher intervention.

“ And now, when thought turns steadily to face
‘ Long home ’ and stewardship resigning,
What can I do but delegate to you
That trust you help’d me at defining ?

“ When I ’m no more, I ’m satisfied my friend
Will deal with properties confided
As I myself, nay better, for his mind
My mind, less qualified, has guided.

“ I ’ve tried to live the conqueror of self,
In full defiance of theosophists
Whose mode and code, held Scriptural, reveal
Themselves but heathenish philosophers.

“ Our aim in life, ’tis stated—and the crowd
Who hears the axiom applauds it—
Should be to get what Providence provides
In bulk, as Providence accords it ;

“To get the most that any one can get
Without intrenching on his neighbour :
To make pursuit of selfishness in fact
Of life the pleasurable labour !

“This aim, so low, yon Clergyman upheld
That once we used to play at loo with :
But you and I—let 's set ourselves to find,
For love, how little we can do with.

“When much surrounds, to constantly abstain
From things we hanker for 's a trial,—
But then we get commensurate delight
When Need gets fruit of our denial !

“To live for self, our appetites to glut,
What 's this but trenching upon others ?
Of most and least, to seize upon the most,
What 's this but injuring our brothers ?

“You 'll not forget the properties you 'll rule,
Are but intrusted to your keeping :
THEY ALL ARE GOD'S ! be vigilant, be just,
And sow—remembering the reaping !

“All small affairs, all items of detail,
You 'll find are specified full carefully
In Will ; and now, I counsel you to act
FOR GOD, both watchfully and prayerfully.

“ And last of all, I supplicate the King
To whom our futures are confided
To guide, to keep, that messenger to me—
When I His messages derided—

“ Whose words that burn'd woke echoes in my soul,
And stirred those monitors within me,
Which, while they told of severance from fold
Proclaim'd Love's eagerness to win me.

“ My dear dear Friend, best counsellor I've known,
May God's own likeness be upon you,
And may you live reflector of the Love
That shines so plenteously on you ! ”

Dear Hal ! dear Hal ! thy letter as a glass
Reflects my faultiness of living ;
May God, indeed, that character bestow—
Like Christ—perfection of His giving !

* * * * *

My tale is told : now, prematurely old,
The wealth bequeathed to me grows vaster ;
But no account of stewardship I give,—
That's not for any but The Master.

THE END.



